

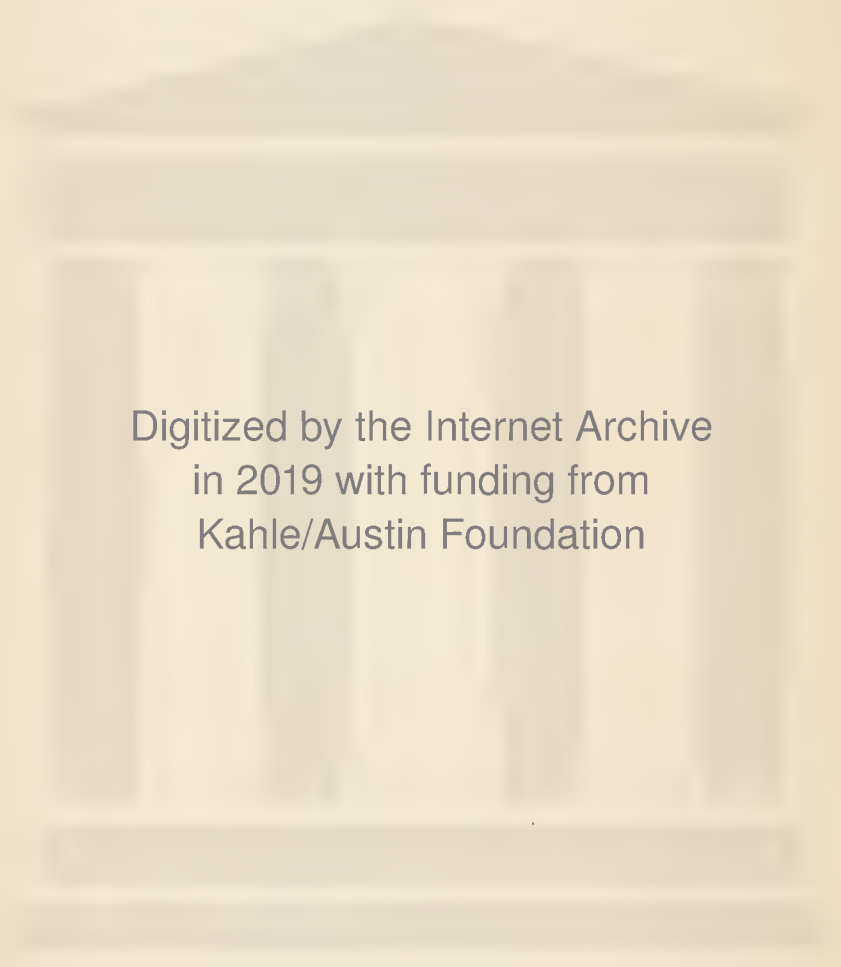
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H. DE BALZAC

THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE



THE VENIAL SIN.

H. DE BALZAC

DROLL STORIES

(CONTES DROLATIQUES)

COLLECTED FROM

THE ABBEYS OF TOURAINE

VOL. I

WITH A PREFACE BY

JNO. RUDD, B.A.



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Drawn specially for this edition.

PREFACE.

THE "Contes Drolatiques" are submitted without any need of introduction other than being what they are, a chronicle of the men and manners of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They are most assuredly not milk for infants, but strong meat for men. Odious though comparison may be, it enables one to judge with greater accuracy the merits of a work. On this line the "Contes Drolatiques" stand on no lower plane than the "Tom Jones" of Henry Fielding; Smollett's "Peregrine Pickle" and "Humphrey Clinker;" or that once be-praised work "Pamela," by the immortal Samuel Richardson, or his equally famous "Clarissa Harlowe." Even during the present century, indeed when it was well advanced, the former was placed in the hands of young girls as a text-book, the study of which should protect them against the wiles of seducing man. To-day the same work might be considered "light-reading" even by a courtesan.

Again, the brutal frankness of the English language does not lend itself kindly to those nice shades and subtleties which above all others is so characteristically beautiful in that of the French. Indecency is always vulgar, and where in these pages vulgarity may be traced it must be ascribed not to the author but to the tawdry clothes in which he is draped.

The second volume of "Droll Stories," in addition to the prologues and epilogues, of which originally they formed part, will also contain "Sarrasine," "La Fille aux Yeux d'or" (The Girl with Golden Eyes), and "Une Passion dans le désert" (A Passion in the Desert), three of de Balzac's most powerful works, but too "inconvenient" for general reading.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

WHEN, in March, 1832, the first volume of the now famous "Contes Drolatiques" was published by Gosselin of Paris, de Balzac, in a short preface, written in the publisher's name, replied to those attacks which he anticipated certain critics would make upon his hardy experiment. He claimed for his book the protection of all those to whom literature was dear, because it was a work of art—and a work of art, in the highest sense of the word, it undoubtedly is.

Like Boccaccio, Rabelais, the Queen of Navarre, Ariosto, and Verville, the great author of the COMÉDIE HUMAINE has painted an epoch. In the fresh and wonderful language of the "Merry Vicar of Meudon," he has given us a marvelous picture of French life and manners in the sixteenth century. The gallant knights and merry dames of that eventful period of French history stand out in bold relief upon his canvas. The background to these life-like figures is, as it were, "sketched upon the spot." After reading the "Contes Drolatiques," one could almost find one's way about the towns and villages of Touraine, unassisted by map or guide.

Not only is this book a work of art from its historical information and topographical accuracy; its claims to that distinction rest upon a broader foundation. Written in the nineteenth century in imitation of the style of the sixteenth, it is a triumph of literary archæology. It is a model of that which it professes to imitate; the production of a writer who, to accomplish it, must have been at once historian, linguist, philosopher, archæologist, and anatomist, and each in no ordinary degree. In France his work has long been regarded as a classic—as a faithful picture of the last days of the *moyen âge*, when kings and princesses, brave gentlemen and haughty ladies,

laughed openly at stories and jokes which are considered disgraceful by their more fastidious descendants.

In English-speaking nations the difficulties of the language employed, and the quaintness and peculiarity of its style, have placed it beyond the reach of all but those thoroughly acquainted with the French of the sixteenth century. Taking into consideration the vast amount of historical information enshrined in its pages, the archæological value which it must always possess for the student, and the dramatic interest of its stories, it was thought that an English edition of Balzac's *chef-d'œuvre* would be acceptable to many. It has, of course, been impossible to reproduce in all its vigor and freshness the language of the original. Many of the quips and cranks and puns have been lost in the process of Anglicizing. These unavoidable blemishes apart, the writer ventures to hope that he has treated this great masterpiece in a reverent spirit, touched it with no sacrilegious hand, but on the contrary, given as close a translation as the dissimilarities of the two languages permit.

With this idea, no attempt has been made to polish or round many of the awkwardly constructed sentences which are characteristic of this volume. Rough, and occasionally obscure, they are far more in keeping with the spirit of the original than the polished periods of modern romance. Taking into consideration the many difficulties which he has had to overcome, and which those best acquainted with the French edition will most appreciate, the translator claims the indulgence of the critical reader for any shortcomings he may discover. The best plea that can be offered for such indulgence is the fact that, although the "*Contes Drolatiques*" were completed and published in 1837, the present is the first, and remains the only complete, English version ever brought before the public.

J. R.

DROLL STORIES

(*Contes Drolatiques*).

THE FAIR IMPERIA.

THE archbishop of Bordeaux had added to his suite when going to the Council at Constance quite a good-looking little priest of Touraine, whose ways and manner of speech were so charming that he passed for a son of La Soldée and the governor. The archbishop of Tours had willingly given him to his confrère for his journey to that town, because it was usual for archbishops to make each other presents, they well knowing how sharp are the itchings of theological palms. Thus this young priest came to the Council and was lodged in the establishment of his prelate, a man of good morals and great science.

Philippe de Mala, as he was called, resolved to behave well and worthily to serve his protector, but he saw in this mysterious Council many men leading a dissolute life and yet not making less, nay—gaining more indulgences, gold crowns, and benefices than all the other virtuous and well-behaved ones. Now during one night—dangerous to his virtue—the devil whispered into his ear that he should live more luxuriously, since every one sucked the breasts of our holy mother church and yet they were not drained, a miracle which proved beyond doubt the existence of God. And the little priest of Touraine did not disappoint the devil. He promised to feast himself, to eat his bellyful of roast meats and other German delicacies, when he could do so without paying for them, as he was poor. As he remained quite continent (in which he followed the example of the poor old archbishop, who sinned no longer because he was unable to, and passed for a saint), he had to suffer from intolerable desires followed by fits of melan-

choly, since there were so many sweet courtesans, well developed, but cold to the poor people, who inhabited Constance, to enlighten the understanding of the fathers of the Council. He was savage that he did not know how to make up to these gallant sirens, who snubbed cardinals, abbots, councilors, legates, bishops, princes, and margraves, just as if they had been penniless clerks. And in the evening, after prayers, he would practice speaking to them, teaching himself the breviary of love. He taught himself to answer all possible questions, but on the morrow if by chance he met one of the aforesaid princesses dressed out, seated in a litter and escorted by her proud and well-armed pages, he remained open-mouthed, like a dog in the act of catching flies, at the sight of the sweet countenance that so much inflamed him. The secretary of monseigneur, a gentleman of Perigord, having clearly explained to him that the fathers, procureurs, and auditors of the Rota bought by certain presents, not relics or indulgences, but jewels and gold, the favor of being familiar with the best of these pampered cats who lived under the protection of the lords of the Council, the poor Tourangeau, all simpleton and innocent as he was, treasured up under his mattress the money given him by the good archbishop for writings and copying—hoping one day to have enough just to see a cardinal's lady-love, and trusting in God for the rest. He was hairless from top to toe and resembled a man about as much as a goat with a night-dress on resembles a young lady, but, prompted by his desires, he wandered in the evenings through the streets of Constance, careless of his life, and, at the risk of having his body halberded by the soldiers, he peeped at the cardinals entering the houses of their sweethearts. Then he saw the wax-candles lighted in the houses and suddenly the doors and the windows closed. Then he heard the blessed abbots or others jumping about, drinking, enjoying themselves, love-making, singing alleluia and applauding the music with which they were being regaled. The kitchen per-

formed miracles, the offices said were fine rich potfuls, the matins sweet little hams, the vespers luscious mouthfuls, and the laudes delicate sweetmeats, and after their little carouses, these brave priests were silent, their pages diced upon the stairs, their mules stamped restively in the streets; everything went well—— but faith and religion were there. That is how it came to pass the goodman Huss was burned. And the reason? He put his finger in the pie without being asked. Then why was he a Huguenot before the others?

To return, however, to our sweet little Philippe, not infrequently did he receive many a thump and hard blow, but the devil sustained him, inciting him to believe that sooner or later it would come to his turn to play the cardinal to some lovely damsel. This ardent desire gave him the boldness of a stag in autumn, so much so that one evening he quietly tripped up the steps and into one of the first houses in Constance, where often he had seen officers, seneschals, valets, and pages waiting with torches for their masters—dukes, kings, cardinals, archbishops.

“Ah!” said he, “she must be very beautiful and amiable, this one.”

A soldier well armed allowed him to pass, believing him to belong to the suite of the Elector of Bavaria, who had just left, and that he was going to deliver a message on behalf of the above-mentioned nobleman. Philippe de Mala mounted the stairs as lightly as a greyhound in love, and was guided by a delectable odor of perfume to a certain chamber, where, surrounded by her handmaidens, the lady of the house was divesting herself of her attire. He stood quite dumfounded, like a thief surprised by sergeants. The lady was without petticoat or head-dress. The chambermaids and the servants, busy taking off her stockings and undressing her, so quickly and dexterously had her stripped that the priest, overcome, gave vent to a long *Ah!* which had a flavor of love about it.

“What want you, little one?” said the lady to him.

"To yield my soul to you," said he, flashing his eyes upon her.

"You may come again to-morrow," said she, in order to be rid of him.

To which Philippe replied, blushing, "I will not fail."

Then she burst out laughing. Philippe, struck motionless, stood quite at his ease, letting wander over her his eyes that glowed and sparkled with the flame of love. What lovely thick hair hung over her ivory-white back, showing sweet white places, fair and shining, between the many tresses! She had upon her snow-white brow a ruby circlet, less fertile in rays of fire than her black eyes, still moist with tears from her hearty laugh. She even threw her slipper at a statue gilded like a shrine, twisting herself about from very ribaldry, and allowed her bare foot, smaller than a swan's bill, to be seen. This evening she was in a good humor, otherwise she would have had the little shaven-crown put out by the window without more ado than her first bishop.

"He has fine eyes, madame," said one of the handmaids.

"Where does he come from?" asked another.

"Poor child!" cried madame, "his mother must be looking for him. Show him his way home."

The Tourangeau, still sensible, gave a movement of delight at the sight of the brocaded bed where the sweet form was about to repose. This glance, full of amorous intelligence, awoke the lady's fantasy, who, half laughing and half smitten, repeated "To-morrow," and dismissed him with a gesture which the pope Jehan himself would have obeyed, especially as he was like a snail without a shell, since the Council had just deprived him of the holy keys.

"Ah! madame, there is another vow of chastity changed into an amorous desire," said one of her women; and the chuckles commenced again thick as hail.

Philippe went his way, bumping his head against the wall like a hooded rook as he was. So giddy had he become at

the sight of this creature, even more enticing than a siren rising from the water. He noticed the animals carved over the door and returned to the house of the archbishop with his head full of diabolical longings and his entrails sophisticated. Once in his little room he counted his coins all night long, but could make no more than four of them; and as that was all his treasure, he counted upon satisfying the fair one by giving her all he had in the world.

"What is it ails you?" said the good archbishop, uneasy at the groans and "oh! oh's!" of his clerk.

"Ah! my lord," answered the poor priest, "I am wondering how it is that so light and sweet a woman can weigh so heavily upon my heart."

"Which one?" said the archbishop, putting down his breviary, which he was reading for others—the good man.

"Oh! Mother of God! you will scold me, I know, my good master, my protector, because I have seen the lady of a cardinal at the least, and I am weeping because I lack more than one little crown to enable me to convert her."

The archbishop, knitting the circumflex accent that he had above his nose, said not a word. Then the very humble priest trembled in his skin to have confessed so much to his superior. But the holy man directly said to him: "She must be very dear then——"

"Ah!" said he; "she has swallowed many a mitre and stolen many a cross."

"Well, Philippe, if thou wilt renounce her, I will present thee with thirty angels from the poor-box."

"Ah! my lord, I should be losing too much," replied the lad, emboldened by the treat he promised himself.

"Ah! Philippe," said the good prelate, "thou wilt then go to the devil and displease God, like all our cardinals," and the master, with sorrow, began to pray Saint-Gatien, the patron saint of Innocents, to save his servant. He made him kneel down beside him, telling him to recommend himself also to

Saint-Philippe, but the wretched priest implored the saint beneath his breath to prevent him from failing if on the morrow the lady should receive him kindly and mercifully; and the good archbishop, observing the fervor of his servant, cried out to him: "Courage, little one, and heaven will exorcise thee."

On the morrow, while monsieur was declaiming at the Council against the shameless behavior of the apostles of Christianity, Philippe de Mala spent his angels—acquired with so much labor—in perfumes, baths, fomentations, and other fooleries. He played the fop so well, one would have thought him the fancy cavalier of a gay lady. He wandered about the town in order to find the residence of his heart's queen; and when he asked the passers-by to whom belonged the aforesaid house, they laughed in his face, saying—

"Whence comes this precious fellow that has not heard of *La Belle Imperia*?"

He was very much afraid that he and his angels were gone to the devil when he heard the name, and knew into what a nice mess he had voluntarily fallen.

Imperia was the most precious, the most fantastic girl in the world, although she passed for the most dazzlingly beautiful, and the one who best understood the art of bamboozling cardinals and softening the hardest soldiers and oppressors of the people. She had brave captains, archers, and nobles, ready to serve her at every turn. She had only to breathe a word, and the business of any one who had offended her was settled. A free fight only brought a smile to her lips, and often the Sire de Baudricourt—one of the King's captains—would ask her if there was any one he could kill for her that day—a little joke at the expense of the abbots. With the exception of the potentates among the high clergy, with whom Madame Imperia managed to accommodate her little tempers, she ruled every one with a high hand in virtue of her pretty babble and enchanting ways, which enthralled the most virtuous and the

most unimpressible. Thus she lived beloved and respected, quite as much as the real ladies and princesses, and was called "madame," concerning which the good Emperor Sigismund replied to a lady who complained of it to him, "That they, the good ladies, might keep to their own proper way and holy virtues, and Madame Imperia to the sweet naughtiness of the goddess Venus"—Christian words which shocked the good ladies, to their credit be it said.

Philippe, then thinking over in his mind that which on the preceding evening he had seen with his eyes, doubted if more did not remain behind. Then was he sad, and, without taking bite or sup, strolled about the town waiting the appointed hour, although he was well-favored and gallant enough to find others less difficult to overcome than was Madame Imperia.

The night came; the little Tourangeau, exalted with pride, caparisoned with desire, and spurred by his "alacks" and "alases," which nearly choked him, glided like an eel into the domicile of the veritable Queen of the Council—for before her bowed humbly all the authority, science, and wisdom of Christianity. The *major domo* did not know him, and was going to bundle him out again, when one of the chamberwomen called out from the top of the stairs—"Eh, Monsieur Imbert, it is madame's young fellow," and poor Philippe, blushing like a wedding-night, ran up the stairs, shaking with happiness and delight. The servant took him by the hand and led him into the chamber where sat madame, lightly attired, like a brave woman who awaits her conqueror.

The dazzling Imperia was seated near a table covered with a shaggy cloth ornamented with gold, and with all the requisites for a dainty carouse. Flagons of wine, various drinking glasses, bottles of hippocras, flasks full of the good wine of Cyprus, pretty boxes full of spices, roast peacocks, green sauces, little salt hams—all that would gladden the eyes of the gallant if he had not so madly loved Madame Imperia. She saw well that the eyes of the young priest were all for her.

Although accustomed to the curl-paper devotion of the churchmen, she was well satisfied that she had made a conquest of the young priest who all day long had been in her head.

The windows had been closed; madame was decked out and in a manner fit to do the honors to a prince of the Empire. Then the rogue, beatified by the holy beauty of Imperia, knew that emperor, burgraf, nay, even a cardinal about to be elected pope, would willingly for that night have changed places with him, a little priest who, beneath his gown, had only the devil and love.

He put on a lordly air, and saluted her with a courtesy by no means ungraceful; and then the sweet lady said to him, regaling him with a piercing glance:

"Come and sit close to me, that I may see if you have altered since yesterday."

"Oh yes," said he.

"And how?" said she.

"Yesterday," replied the artful fellow, "I loved you; to-day, we love each other, and from a poor sinner I have become richer than a king."

"Oh, little one, little one!" cried she, merrily; "yes, you are indeed changed, for from a young priest I see well you have turned into an old devil." And side by side they sat down before a large fire, which helped to spread their ecstasy around. They remained always ready to begin eating, seeing that they only thought of gazing into each other's eyes, and never touched a dish. Just as they were beginning to feel comfortable and at their ease, there came a great noise at madame's door, as if people were beating against it, and crying out.

"Madame," cried the little servant, hastily, "here's another of them."

"Who is it?" cried she in a haughty manner, like a tyrant, savage at being interrupted.

"The bishop of Coire wishes to speak with you."

"May the devil take him!" said she, looking at Philippe gently.

"Madame, he has seen the lights through the chinks, and is making a great noise."

"Tell him I have the fever, and you will be telling him no lie, for I am ill of this little priest, who is torturing my brain."

But just as she had finished speaking, and was pressing with devotion the hand of Philippe, who trembled in his skin, appeared the fat bishop of Coire, indignant and angry. The officers followed him, bearing a trout canonically dressed, fresh drawn from the Rhine, and shining in a golden platter, and spices contained in little ornamented boxes, and a thousand little dainties, such as liqueurs and jams, made by the holy nuns at his abbey.

"Ah, ah," said he, with his deep voice, "I haven't time to go to the devil, but you must give me a touch of him in advance, eh! my little one."

"Your belly will one day make a nice sheath for a sword," replied she, knitting her brows above her eyes, which from being soft and gentle had become mischievous enough to make one tremble.

"And this little chorus singer is here to offer that?" said the bishop, insolently turning his great rubicund face toward Philippe.

"Monseigneur, I am here to confess madame."

"Oh, oh, do you not know the canons? To confess the ladies at this time of night is a right reserved to bishops, so take yourself off; go and herd with simple monks, and never come back here again under pain of excommunication."

"Do not move," cried the blushing Imperia, more lovely with passion than she was with love, because now she was possessed both with passion and love. "Stop, my friend. Here you are in your own house." Then he knew that he was really loved by her.

"Is it not in the breviary, and an evangelical regulation, that you shall be equal before God in the valley of Jehoshaphat?" asked she of the bishop.

"'Tis an invention of the devil, who has adulterated the holy book," replied the great numskull of a bishop, in a hurry to fall to.

"Well, then, be equal now before me, who am here below your goddess," replied Imperia, "otherwise one of these days I will have you delicately strangled between the head and shoulders; I swear it by the power of my tonsure, which is as good as the pope's." And wishing that the trout should be added to the feast as well as the sweets and other dainties, she added, cunningly: "Sit you down and drink with us." But the artful minx, being up to a trick or two, gave the little one a wink which told him plainly not to mind the German, whom she would soon find a means to be rid of.

The servant-maid seated the bishop at the table and tucked him up, while Philippe, wild with a rage that closed his mouth, because he saw his plans ending in smoke, gave the archbishop to more devils than there ever were monks alive. Thus they got half way through the repast, which the young priest had not yet touched, hungering only for Imperia, near whom he was already seated, but speaking that sweet language which the ladies so well understand, that has neither stops, commas, accents, letters, figures, characters, notes, nor images. The fat bishop, sensual and careful enough of the sleek ecclesiastical garment of skin for which he was indebted to his late mother, allowed himself to be plentifully served with hippocras by the delicate hand of madame, and it was just at his first hiccough that the sound of an approaching cavalcade was heard in the street. The number of horses, the "Ho, ho!" of the pages, showed plainly that some great prince hot with love was about to arrive. In fact, a moment afterward the cardinal of Ragusa, against whom the servants of Imperia had not dared to bar the door, entered the room. At this

terrible sight the poor courtesan and her young lover became ashamed and embarrassed, like fresh-cured lepers ; for it would be tempting the devil to try and oust the cardinal, the more so as at that time it was not known who would be pope, three aspirants having resigned their hoods for the benefit of Christianity. The cardinal, who was a cunning Italian, long-headed, a great sophist, and the life and soul of the Council, guessed, by the feeblest exercise of the faculties of his understanding, the alpha and omega of the adventure. He only had to weigh in his mind one little thought before he knew how to proceed in order to be able to hypothecate his manly vigor. He arrived with the appetite of a hungry monk, and to obtain its satisfaction he was just the man to stab two monks and sell his bit of the true cross, which was wrong.

“Halloo ! friend,” said he to Philippe, calling him toward him.

The poor Tourangeau, more dead than alive, and expecting the devil was about to interfere seriously with his arrangements, rose and said : “What is it ?” to the redoubtable cardinal.

He, taking him by the arm, led him on to the staircase, looked him in the white of the eye, and said, without any nonsense :

“*Ventre de Dieu !* you are a nice little fellow, and I should not like to have to let your master know the weight of your carcase. My revenge might cause me certain pious expenses in my old age, so choose to espouse an abbey for the remainder of your days, or to marry madame to-night and die to-morrow.”

The poor little Tourangeau in despair murmured : “May I come back when your passion is over ?”

The cardinal could scarcely keep his countenance, but he said sternly : “Choose the gallows or a mitre.”

“Ah !” said the priest, maliciously ; “a good fat abbey.”

Thereupon the cardinal went back into the room, opened

an *escritoire*, and scribbled upon a piece of parchment an order to the envoy of France.

"Monseigneur," said the Tourangeau to him while he was spelling out the order, "you will not get rid of the bishop of Coire so easily as you have gotten rid of me, for he has as many abbeys as the soldiers have drinking shops in the town; beside, he is in the favor of his lord. Now I fancy, to show you my gratitude for this so fine abbey, I owe you a good piece of advice. You know how fatal has been and how rapidly spread this terrible pestilence which has cruelly harassed Paris. Tell him that you have just left the bedside of your old friend the archbishop of Bordeaux; thus you will make him scutter away like straw before a whirlwind."

"Oh, oh!" cried the cardinal, "thou meritest more than an abbey. Ah, *Ventre de Dieu!* my young friend, here are one hundred golden crowns for thy journey to the abbey of Turpenay, which I won yesterday at cards, and of which I make you a free gift."

Hearing these words, and seeing Philippe de Mala disappear without giving her the amorous glances she expected, the beautiful Imperia, puffing like a dolphin, denounced all the cowardice of the priest. She was not then a sufficiently good Catholic to pardon her lover deceiving her, by not knowing how to die for her pleasure. Thus the death of Philippe was foreshadowed in the viper's glance she cast at him to insult him, which glance pleased the cardinal much, for the wily Italian saw he would soon get his abbey back again. The Tourangeau, heeding not the brewing storm, avoided it by walking out silently and with his ears down, like a wet dog being kicked out of church. Madame drew a sigh from her heart. She must have had her own ideas of humanity for the little value she held it in. The fire which possessed her had mounted to her head and scintillated in rays about her, and there was good reason for it, for this was the first time that she had been humbugged by a priest. Then the cardinal

smiled, believing it was all to his advantage: was not he a cunning fellow? Yes, he was the possessor of a red hat.

"Ah! ah! my friend," said he to the bishop, "I congratulate myself on being in your company, and I am glad to have been able to get rid of that little wretch unworthy of madame, the more so as if you had gone near him, my lovely and amiable creature, you would have perished miserably, through the deed of a simple priest."

"Ah! How?"

"He is the secretary of the archbishop of Bordeaux. The good man was seized this morning with the pestilence."

The bishop opened his mouth wide enough to swallow a Dutch cheese.

"How do you know that?" asked he.

"Ah!" said the cardinal, taking the good German's hand, "I have just administered to him and consoled him; at this moment the holy man has a fair wind to waft him to paradise."

The bishop of Coire demonstrated immediately how light fat men are; for when men are big-bellied, a merciful Providence, in the consideration of their works, often makes their internal tubes as elastic as balloons. The aforesaid bishop sprang backward with one bound, burst into a perspiration, and coughed like a cow who finds feathers mixed with her hay. Then becoming suddenly pale, he rushed down the stairs without even bidding madame adieu. When the door had closed upon the bishop, and he was fairly in the street, the cardinal of Ragusa began laughing fit to split his sides.

"Ah, my fair one, am I not worthy to be pope, and better than that, thy lover this evening?"

But seeing Imperia thoughtful, he approached her to take her in his arms and pet her after the usual fashion of cardinals, men who embrace better than all others, even the soldiers, because they are lazy, and do not spare their essential properties.

"Ha!" said she, drawing back, "you wish to cause my death, you ecclesiastical idiot. The principal thing for you is to enjoy yourself; my secret carcase, a thing accessory. Your pleasure will be my death, and then you'll canonize me perhaps? Ah, you have the plague, and you would give it to me. Go somewhere else, you brainless priest. Ah! touch me not," said she, seeing him about to advance, "or I will stab you with this dagger."

And the clever hussy drew from her closet a little dagger, which she knew how to use with great skill when necessary.

"But, my little paradise, my sweet one," said the other, laughing, "don't you see the trick? Wasn't it necessary to get rid of that old bullock of Coire?"

"Well, then, if you love me, show it," replied she. "I desire that you leave me instantly. If you are touched with the disease, my death will not worry you. I know you well enough to know at what price you will put a moment of pleasure at your last hour. You would drown the earth. Ah! ah! you have boasted of it when drunk. I love only myself, my treasures, and my health. Go, and if to-morrow your veins are not frozen by the disease, you may come again. To-day, I hate you, my good cardinal," said she, smiling.

"Imperia!" cried the cardinal, on his knees, "my blessed Imperia, do not play with me thus."

"No," said she, "I never play with blessed and sacred things."

"Ah! ribald woman, I will excommunicate thee to-morrow."

"And now you are out of your cardinal sense."

"Imperia, cursed daughter of Satan! Oh, my little beauty—my love——"

"Respect yourself more. Don't kneel to me; fie, for shame!"

"Wilt thou have a dispensation at the point of death?*

* *In articulo mortis.*

Wilt thou have my fortune—or better still, a bit of the veritable true cross?—wilt thou?”

“This evening, all the wealth of heaven above and earth beneath would not buy my heart,” said she, laughing. “I should be the blackest of sinners, unworthy to receive the blessed sacrament if I had not my little caprices.”

“I’ll burn the house down. Sorceress, you have bewitched me. You shall perish at the stake. Listen to me, my love—my gentle dove—I promise you the best place in heaven. Eh? No. Death to you then—death to the sorceress.”

“Oh! oh! I will kill you, monseigneur.”

Then the cardinal foamed with rage.

“You are making a fool of yourself,” said she. “Go away; you’ll tire yourself.”

“I shall be pope, and you shall pay for this!”

“Then you are no longer disposed to obey me?”

“What can I do this evening to please you?”

“Get out.”

And she sprang lightly like a wagtail into her room, and locked herself in, leaving the cardinal to storm that he was obliged to go. When the fair Imperia found herself alone, seated before the fire, and without her little priest, she exclaimed, snapping angrily the gold links of her chain: “By the double-triple horn of the devil, if the little one has made me have this row with the cardinal, and exposed me to the danger of being poisoned to-morrow, unless I pay him out to my heart’s content, I will not die till I have seen him burnt alive before my eyes. Ah!” said she, weeping, this time real tears, “I lead a most unhappy life, and the little pleasure I have costs me the life of a dog, let alone my salvation.”

As she finished this jeremiad, wailing like a calf that is being slaughtered, she beheld the blushing face of the young priest, who had hidden himself, peeping at her from behind her large Venetian mirror.

“Ah!” said she, “thou art the most perfect monk that ever dwelt in this blessed and amorous town of Constance. Ah! ah! come, my gentle cavalier, my dear boy, my little charm, my paradise of delectation, let me drink thine eyes, eat thee, kill thee with love. Oh! my ever-flourishing, ever-green, sempiternal god; from a little monk I would make thee a king, emperor, pope, and happier than any one. There, thou canst put anything to fire and sword, I am thine, and thou shalt see it well; for thou shalt be all a cardinal, even when to redden thy hood I shed all my heart’s blood.” And with her trembling hands all joyously she filled with Greek wine the golden cup, brought by the bishop of Coire, and presented it to her sweetheart, whom she served upon her knee, she whose slipper princes found more to their taste than that of the pope.

But he gazed at her in silence, with his eyes so lustrous with love, that she said to him, trembling with joy: “Ah, be quiet, little one. Let us have supper.”



THE VENIAL SIN.

HOW THE GOODMAN BRUYN TOOK A WIFE.

MESSIRE BRUYN, he who completed the castle of Roche-Corbon-les-Vouvray, on the banks of the Loire, was a boisterous fellow in his youth. When quite little, he squeezed the young maidens, turned the house out of windows, and played the devil with everything, when he was called upon to put his sire the Baron of Roche-Corbon some few feet under the turf. Then he was his own master, free to lead a life of wild dissipation, and indeed he worked very hard to get a surfeit of enjoyment. Now by making his crowns sweat and his goods scarce, draining his land, and bleeding his hogsheads, and regaling frail beauties, he found himself excommunicated from decent society, and had for his friends only the plunderers of towns and the Lombardians. But the usurers turned rough and bitter as chestnut husks, when he had no other security to give them than his said estate of Roche-Corbon, since the *Rupes Carbonis* was held from our lord the King. Then Bruyn found himself just in the humor to give a blow here and there, to break a collar-bone or two, and quarrel with every one about trifles. Seeing which the abbot of Marmoustiers, his neighbor, and a man liberal with his advice, told him that it was an evident sign of lordly perfection, that he was walking in the right road, but if he would go and slaughter, to the great glory of God, the Mohammedans who defiled the Holy Land, it would be better still, and that he would undoubtedly return full of wealth and indulgences into Touraine, or into paradise, whence all barons formerly came.

The said Bruyn, admiring the great sense of the prelate, left the country equipped by the monastery, and blessed by

the abbot, to the great delight of his friends and neighbors. Then he put to the sack many towns of Asia and Africa, and fell upon the infidels without giving them warning, burning the Saracens, the Greeks, the English and others, caring little whether they were friends or enemies, or where they came from, since among his merits he had that of being in no way curious, and he never questioned them until after he had killed them. At this business, agreeable to God, to the King, and to himself, Bruyn gained renown as a good Christian and loyal knight, and enjoyed himself thoroughly in these lands beyond the seas, since he more willingly gave a crown to the girls than to the poor, although he met more poor people than perfect maids; but like a good Tourangeau he made soup of anything. At length, when he was satiated with Turks, relics, and other blessings of the Holy Land, Bruyn, to the great astonishment of the people of Vouvrillons, returned from the Crusades laden with crowns and precious stones; rather differently from some who, rich when they set out, came back heavy with leprosy, but light with gold. On his return from Tunis, our lord, King Philippe, made him a count, and appointed him his seneschal in our country and in that of Poitou. There he was greatly beloved and properly thought well of, since over and above his good qualities he founded the church of the Carmes-Deschaux, in the parish of Egrignolles, as a *piece*-offering to heaven for the follies of his youth. Thus was he cardinally consigned to the good graces of the church and of God. From a wicked youth and reckless man, he became a good, wise man, and discreetly bald from losing his hair; rarely was he in anger, unless some one blasphemed God before him, the which he would not tolerate because he had blasphemed enough for every one in his wild youth. In short, he never quarreled, because, being seneschal, people gave up to him instantly. It is true that he at that time beheld all his desires accomplished, the which would render even an imp of Satan calm and tranquil from his horns to his heels.

And beside this he possessed a castle all jagged at the corners, and shaped and pointed like a Spanish doublet, situated upon a bank from which it was reflected in the Loire. In the rooms were royal tapestries, furniture, Saracen pomps, vanities, and inventions which were much admired by the people of Tours, and even by the archbishop and clerks of St. Martin, to whom he sent as a free gift a banner fringed with fine gold. In the neighborhood of the said castle abounded fair domains, wind-mills, and forests, yielding a harvest of rents of all kinds, so that he was one of the strongest knights-banneret of the department, and could easily have led to battle for our lord the King a thousand men. In his old days, if by chance his bailiff, a diligent man at hanging, brought before him a poor peasant suspected of some offense, he would say, smiling:

“Let this one go, Breddiff; he will count against those I inconsiderately slaughtered across the seas;” oftentimes, however, he would let them bravely hang on a chestnut tree or swing on his gallows, but this was solely that justice might be done, and that the custom should not lapse in his domain. Thus the people on his lands were good and orderly, like fresh veiled nuns; and peaceful, since he protected them from robbers and vagabonds, whom he never spared, knowing by experience how much mischief is caused by these cursed beasts of prey. For the rest, most devout, finishing everything quickly, his prayers as well as good wine, he managed the processes after the Turkish fashion, having a thousand little jokes ready for the losers, and dining with them to console them. He had all the people who had been hanged buried in consecrated ground like godly ones, some people thinking they had been sufficiently punished by having their breath stopped. He only persecuted the Jews now and then, and when they were glutted with usury and wealth. He let them gather their spoil as the bees do honey, saying that they were the best of tax-gatherers. And never did he despoil them save

for the profit and use of the churchmen, the King, the province, or—himself.

This jovial way gained for him the affection and esteem of every one, great and small. If he came back smiling from his judicial throne, the abbot of Marmoustiers, an old man like himself, would say, "Ha! ha! messire, there is some hanging on since you laugh thus!" And when coming from Roche-Corbon to Tours he passed on horseback along the Faubourg St.-Symphorien, the little girls would say, "Ah, this is the justice day, here is the goodman Bruyn," and without being afraid they would look at him astride on a big white steed, that he had brought back with him from the Levant. On the bridge the little boys would stop playing with the ball, and would call out: "Good-day, Monsieur Seneschal;" and he would reply, jokingly: "Enjoy yourselves, my children, until you get whipped." "Yes, Monsieur Seneschal."

Also he made the country so contented and so free from robbers that during the year of the great overflowing of the Loire there were only twenty-two malefactors hanged that winter, not counting a Jew burned in the Commune of Chateau-Neuf for having stolen a consecrated wafer, or bought it, some said, for he was very rich.

One day in the following year, about harvest-time, or mowing-time, as we say in Touraine, there came Egyptians, Bohemians, and other wandering troupes, who stole the holy things from the church of St. Martin, and, in the place and exact situation of Madame the Virgin, left, by way of insult and mockery to our holy faith, an abandoned pretty little girl, about the age of an old dog, stark naked, an acrobat, and of Moorish descent like themselves. For this almost nameless crime it was equally decided by the King, people, and churchmen that the Mooress, to pay for all, should be burned and cooked alive in the square near the fountain where the herb-market is. Then the goodman Bruyn clearly and dexterously

demonstrated to the others that it would be a thing most profitable and pleasant to God to gain over this African soul to the true religion, and if the devil were lodged in this feminine body the fagots would be useless to burn him, as said the said order. The which the archbishop sagely thought most canonical and conformable to Christian charity and the Gospel. The ladies of the town and other persons of authority said loudly that they were cheated of a fine ceremony, since the Mooress was crying her eyes out in the jail and would certainly be converted to God in order to live as long as a crow, if she were allowed so to do, to which the seneschal replied that if the foreigner would holily commit herself to the Christian religion there would be a gallant ceremony of another kind, and that he would undertake that it should be royally magnificent, because he would be her sponsor at the baptismal font, and that a virgin should be his partner in the affair, in order the better to please the Almighty, while he, himself, was reputed never to have lost the bloom of innocence, in fact to be a *coquebin*. In our country of Touraine thus are called the young virgin men, unmarried (or so esteemed), to distinguish them from the husbands and the widowers, but the girls always pick them out without the name, because they are more light-hearted and merry than those seasoned in marriage.

The young Mooress did not hesitate between the flaming fagots and the baptismal water. She much preferred to be a Christian and live than be an Egyptian and be burnt; thus, to escape a moment's baking, her heart would burn unquenched through all her life, since for the greater surety of her religion she was placed in the convent of nuns near Chardonneret, where she took the vow of sanctity. The said ceremony was concluded at the residence of the archbishop, where, upon this occasion, in honor of the Saviour of men, the lords and ladies of Touraine hopped, skipped, and danced; for in this country the people dance, skip, eat, flirt, have more feasts and make merrier than any in the whole world. The good old senes-

chal had taken for his associate the daughter of the lord of Azay-le-Ridel, which afterward became Azay-le-Bruslé, the which lord being a Crusader was left before Acre, a far-distant town, in the hands of a Saracen, who demanded a royal ransom for him because the said lord was of high position.

The lady of Azay, having given his estate as security to the Lombards and extortioners in order to raise the sum, remained, without a penny in the world, awaiting her lord in a poor lodging in the town, without a carpet to sit upon, but proud as the Queen of Sheba and brave as a mastiff who defends the property of his master. Seeing this great distress, the seneschal went delicately to request this lady's daughter to be the godmother of the said Egyptian, in order that he might have the right of assisting the lady of Azay. And, in fact, he kept a heavy chain of gold which he had preserved since the commencement of the taking of Cyprus, and the which he determined to clasp about the neck of his pretty associate, but he hung there at the same time his domain, and his white hairs, his money and his horses; in short, he placed there everything he possessed, directly he had seen Blanche of Azay dancing a pavan among the ladies of Tours. Although the Moorish girl, making the most of her last day, had astonished the assembly by her twists, jumps, steps, springs, elevations, and artistic efforts, Blanche had the advantage of her, as every one agreed, so virginally and delicately did she dance.

Now Bruyn, admiring this gentle maiden whose toes seemed to fear the boards, and who amused herself so innocently for her seventeen years—like a grasshopper trying her first note—was seized with an old man's desire; a desire apoplectic and vigorous from weakness, which heated him from the sole of his foot to the nape of his neck—for his head had too much snow on the top of it to let love lodge there. Then the goodman perceived that he needed a wife in his manor, and it appeared more lonely to him than it was. And, what then was a château without a chatelaine (lady of the manor)? As well

have a clapper without its bell. In short, a wife was the only thing that he had to desire, so he wished to have one promptly, seeing that, if the lady of Azay made him wait, he had just time to pass out of this world into the other. But, during the baptismal entertainment, he thought little of his severe wounds, and still less of the eighty years that had stripped his head; he found his eyes clear enough to see distinctly his young companion, who, following the injunctions of the lady of Azay, regaled him well with glance and gesture, believing there could be no danger near so old a fellow, in such wise that Blanche—naïve and nice as she was in contradistinction to the girls of Touraine, who are as wide-awake as a spring morning—permitted the goodman first to kiss her hand, and afterward her neck, rather low down; at least so said the archbishop, who married them the week after; and that was a beautiful bridal and a still more beautiful bride.

The said Blanche was slender and graceful as no other girl, and still better than that, more maidenly than ever maiden was; a maiden all ignorant of love, who knew not why or what it was; a maiden who wondered why certain people lingered in their beds; a maiden who believed that children were found in parsley beds. Her mother had thus reared her in innocence, without even allowing her to consider, trifle as it was, how she sucked in her soup between her teeth. Thus was she a sweet flower, and intact, joyous, and innocent; an angel, who needed but the wings to fly away to paradise. When she left the poor lodging of her weeping mother to consummate her betrothal at the cathedral of St. Gatien and St. Maurice, the country people came to feast their eyes upon the bride, and on the carpets which were laid down all along the Rue de la Scellerie, and all said that never had tinier feet pressed the ground of Touraine, prettier eyes gazed up to heaven, or a more splendid festival adorned the streets with carpets and with flowers. The young girls of St. Martin and of the borough of Château-Neuf all envied the long brown

tresses with which doubtless Blanche had fished for a count, but much more did they desire the gold-embroidered dress, the foreign stones, the white diamonds, and the chains with which the little darling played, and which bound her forever to the said seneschal. The old soldier was so merry by her side that his happiness showed itself in his wrinkles, his looks, and his movements. Although he was hardly as straight as a billhook, he held himself so by the side of Blanche that one would have taken him for a soldier on parade receiving his officer, and he placed his hand on his diaphragm like a man whose pleasure stifles and troubles him. Delighted with the sound of the swinging bells, the procession, the pomps and vanities of this said marriage, which was talked of long after the episcopal rejoicings, the women desired a harvest of Moorish girls, a deluge of old seneschals, and basketfuls of Egyptian baptisms. But this was the only one that ever happened in Touraine, seeing that the country is far from Egypt and from Bohemia. The lady of Azay received a large sum of money after the ceremony, which enabled her to start immediately for Acre to go to her spouse, accompanied by the lieutenant and soldiers of the Count de Roche-Corbon, who furnished them with everything necessary. She set out on the day of the wedding, after having placed her daughter in the hands of the seneschal, enjoining him to treat her well; and later on she returned with the Sire d'Azay, who was leprous, and she cured him, tending him herself, running the risk of being contaminated, the which was greatly admired.

The marriage ceremony finished and at an end—for it lasted three days, to the great contentment of the people—Messire Bruyn with great pomp led the little one to his castle, and, according to the custom of husbands, had her put solemnly to bed in his couch, which was blessed by the abbot of Mar-moustiers; then came and placed himself beside her in the great feudal chamber of Roche-Corbon, which had been hung with green brocade and ribbon of golden wire. When old

Bruyn, perfumed all over, found himself side by side with his pretty wife, he kissed her first upon the forehead and then upon the little round white breast, on the same spot where she had allowed him to clasp the fastenings of the chain, but that was all. The old fellow had not too great confidence in himself in fancying himself able to accomplish more ; so then he abstained from love in spite of the merry nuptial songs, the epithalamiums and jokes which were going on in the rooms beneath where the dancing was still kept up. He refreshed himself with a drink of the marriage beverage, which, according to custom, had been blessed and placed near them in a golden cup. The spices warmed his stomach well enough, but not the heart of his dead ardor. Blanche was not at all astonished at the demeanor of her spouse, because she was a virgin in mind, and in marriage she only saw that which is visible to the eyes of young girls—namely, dresses, banquets, horses, to be a lady and mistress, to have a country-seat, to amuse one's self and give orders ; so, like the child that she was, she played with the gold tassels of the bed, and marveled at the richness of the shrine in which her innocence should be interred. Feeling, a little later in the day, his culpability, and relying on the future, which, however, would spoil a little every day that with which he pretended to regale his wife, the seneschal tried to substitute the word for the deed. So he entertained his wife in various ways, promised her the keys of his sideboards, his granaries and chests, the perfect government of his houses and domains without any control, hanging round her neck “the other half of the loaf,” which is the popular saying in Touraine. She being like a young charger full of hay, found her goodman the most gallant fellow in the world, and raising herself upon her pillow began to smile, and beheld with greater joy this beautiful green brocaded bed, where henceforward she would be permitted, without any sin, to sleep every night. Seeing she was getting playful, the cunning lord, who had not been used to maidens,

but knew from experience the little tricks that women will practice, seeing that he had much associated with ladies of the town, feared those handy tricks, little kisses and minor amusements of love which formerly he did not object to, but which, at the present time, would have found him cold as the obituary of a pope. Then he drew back toward the edge of the bed, afraid of his happiness, and said to his too delectable spouse: "Well, darling, you are a seneschal's wife now, and very well seneschaled as well."

"Oh, no!" said she.

"How no?" replied he, in great fear; "are you not a wife?"

"No," said she. "Nor shall I be till I have a child."

"Did you while coming here see the meadows?" began again the old fellow.

"Yes," said she.

"Well, they are yours."

"Oh! oh!" replied she, laughing, "I shall amuse myself much there catching butterflies."

"That's a good girl," said her lord. "And the woods?"

"Ah! I should not like to be there alone; you will take me there. But," said she, "give me a little of that liqueur which La Ponneuse has taken such pains to prepare for us."

"And why, my darling? It would put fire into your body."

"Oh! that's what I would like," said she, biting her lips with vexation, "because I desire to give you a child as soon as possible; and I am sure that liqueur is good for the purpose."

"Ah, my little one," said the seneschal, knowing by this that Blanche was a virgin from head to foot, "the good-will of God is necessary for this business, and women must be in a state of harvest."

"And when shall I be in a state of harvest?" asked she, smiling.

"When nature so wills it," said he, trying to laugh.

"What is it necessary to do for this?" replied she.

"Bah! a cabalistical and alchemical operation which is very dangerous."

"Ah!" said she, with a dreamy look, "that's the reason why my mother cried when thinking of the said metamorphosis; but Bertha de Breuilly, who is so thankful for being made a wife, told me it was the pleasantest and easiest thing in the world."

"That's according to the age," replied the old lord. "But did you see in the stable the beautiful white mare so much spoken of in Touraine?"

"Yes, she is very gentle and nice."

"Well, I give her to you, and you can ride her as often as the fancy takes you."

"Oh, you are very kind, and they did not lie when they told me so."

"Here," continued he, "sweetheart: the butler, the chaplain, the treasurer, the equerry, the farrier, the bailiff, even the Sire de Montsoreau, the young varlet whose name is Gauttier, and bears my banner, with his men-at-arms, captains, followers, and beasts—all are yours, and will instantly obey your orders under pain of being incommoded with a hempen collar."

"But," replied she, "this mysterious operation—cannot it be performed immediately?"

"Oh, no!" replied the seneschal. "Because it is necessary above all things that both the one and the other of us should be in a state of grace before God; otherwise we should have a bad child, full of sins; which is forbidden by the canons of the church. This is the reason there are so many incorrigible scapegraces in the world. Their parents have not wisely waited to have their souls pure, and have given wicked souls to their children. The beautiful and the virtuous come of immaculate fathers; that is why we cause our beds to be

blessed, as the abbot of Marmoustiers has done this one. Have you not transgressed the ordinances of the church?"

"Oh, no," said she quickly, "I received before mass absolution for all my faults, and have remained since without committing the slightest sin."

"You are very perfect," cried the cunning lord, "and I am delighted to have you for a wife; but I have sworn like an infidel."

"Oh! and why?"

"Because the dancing did not finish, and I could not have you to myself to bring you here and kiss you."

Thereupon he gallantly took her hands and covered them with kisses, whispering to her little endearments and superficial words of affection which made her quite pleased and contented.

Then, fatigued with the dance and all the ceremonies, she settled down to her slumbers, saying to the seneschal:

"I will take care to-morrow that you shall not sin," and she left the old man quite smitten with her white beauty, amorous of her delicate nature, and as embarrassed to know how he should be able to keep her in her innocence as to explain why oxen chew their food twice over. Although he did not augur to himself any good therefrom, it inflamed him so much to see the exquisite perfections of Blanche during her innocent and gentle sleep, that he resolved to preserve and defend this pretty jewel of love. With tears in his eyes he kissed her sweet golden tresses, her beautiful eyelids, and her ripe red mouth, and he did it softly for fear of waking her. That was all his fruition, the dumb delight which still inflamed his heart without in the least affecting Blanche. Then he deplored the snows of his leafless old age, the poor old man, and he saw clearly that God had amused himself by giving him nuts when his teeth were gone.

HOW THE SENESCHAL STRUGGLED WITH HIS
WIFE'S MODESTY.

During the first days of his marriage the seneschal invented many fibs to tell his wife, whose so estimable innocence he abused. Firstly, he found in his judicial functions good excuses for leaving her at times alone; then he occupied himself with the peasants of the neighborhood, and took them to dress the vines on his lands at Vouvray, and at length pampered her up with a thousand absurd tales.

At one time he would say that lords did not behave like common people, that the children were only planted at certain celestial conjunctions ascertained by learned astrologers; at another that one should abstain from begetting children on feast days because it was a great undertaking; and he observed the feasts like a man who wished to enter into paradise without contest. Sometimes he would pretend that if by chance the parents were not in a state of grace, the children commenced on the day of St. Claire were blind, of St. Gatien had the gout, of St. Agnes were scald-headed, of St. Roch had the plague; sometimes that those begotten in February were chilly; in March, too turbulent; in April were worth nothing at all; and that handsome boys were conceived in May. In short, he wished his to be perfect, to have his hair of two colors; and for this it was necessary that all the required conditions should be observed. At other times he would say to Blanche that the right of a man was to bestow a child upon his wife according to his sole and unique will, and that if she pretended to be a virtuous woman she should conform to the wishes of her husband; in fact, it was necessary to await the return of the lady of Azay in order that she should assist at the confinement; from all of which Blanche concluded that the seneschal was annoyed by her requests, and was perhaps

right, since he was old and full of experience ; so she submitted herself and thought no more, except to herself, of this so much-desired child ; that is to say, she was always thinking of it, like a woman who has a desire in her head, without suspecting that she was behaving like a gay lady or a town-walker running after her enjoyment. One evening by accident Bruyn spoke of children, a discourse that he avoided as cats avoid water, but he was complaining of a boy condemned by him that morning for great misdeeds, saying for certain he was the offspring of people laden with mortal sins.

“Alas,” said Blanche, “if you will give me one, although you have not got absolution, I will correct him so well that you will be pleased with him.”

Then the count saw that his wife was bitten by a warm desire, and that it was time to dissipate her innocence in order to make himself master of it, to conquer it, to beat it, or to appease and extinguish it.

“What, my dear, you wish to be a mother?” said he ; “you do not yet know the business of a wife, you are not accustomed to being mistress of the house.”

“Oh ! oh !” said she, “to be a perfect countess, and have in my loins a little count, must I play the great lady ? I will do it, and thoroughly.”

Then Blanche, in order to obtain issue, began to hunt the fawns and the stags, leaping the ditches, galloping upon her mare over valley and mountain, through the woods and the fields, taking great delight in watching the falcons fly, in unhooding them, and while hunting always carried them gracefully upon her little wrist, which was what the seneschal had desired. But in this pursuit, Blanche gained an appetite of nun and prelate—that is to say, wished to procreate, had her desires whetted, and could scarcely restrain her hunger, when on her return she gave play to her teeth. Now by reason of reading the legends written by the way, and of separating by death the embraces of birds and wild beasts, she discovered a

mystery of natural alchemy, while coloring her complexion, and superagitating her feeble imagination, which did little to pacify her warlike nature, and strongly tickled her desire, which laughed, played, and frisked unmistakably. The seneschal thought to disarm the rebellious virtue of his wife by making her scour the country ; but his fraud turned out badly, for the unknown lust that circulated in the veins of Blanche emerged from these assaults more hardy than before, inviting joust and tourneys as a herald the armed knight.

The good lord saw then that he had grossly erred and that he was now upon the horns of a dilemma ; also he no longer knew what course to adopt ; the longer he left it the more it would resist. From this combat, there must result one conquered and one contused—a diabolical contusion which he wished to keep distant from his physiognomy by God's help until after his death. The poor seneschal had already great trouble to follow his lady to the chase, without being dismounted ; he sweated under the weight of his trappings, and almost expired in that pursuit wherein his frisky wife cheered her life and took great pleasure. Many times in the evening she wished to dance. Now the good man, swathed in his heavy clothing, found himself quite worn out with these exercises, in which he was constrained to participate either in giving her his hand, when she performed the vaults of the Moorish girl, or in holding the lighted fagot for her, when she had a fancy to do the torchlight dance ; and in spite of his sciaticas, accretions, and rheumatisms, he was obliged to smile and say to her some gentle words and gallantries after all the evolutions, mummeries, and comic pantomimes which she indulged in to divert herself ; for he loved her so madly that if she had asked him for an impossibility he would have sought one for her immediately.

Nevertheless, one fine day he recognized the fact that his frame was in a state of too great debility to struggle with the vigorous nature of his wife, and humiliating himself before his

wife's virtue, he resolved to let things take their course, relying a little upon the modesty, religion, and bashfulness of Blanche; but he always slept with one eye open, for he suspected that God had made virginities to be taken like partridges, to be spitted and roasted. One wet morning, when the weather was that in which the snails make their tracks, a melancholy time, and suitable to reverie, Blanche was in the house sitting in her chair in deep thought, because nothing produces more lively coctions of the substantive essences, and no receipt, specific, or philter is more penetrating, transpiercing, or doubly transpiercing and titillating than the subtle warmth which simmers between the cushion of a chair and a maiden sitting during certain weather.

Now, without knowing it, the countess was incommoded by her innocence, which gave more trouble than it was worth to her brain, and gnawed her all over. Then the goodman, seriously grieved to see her languishing, wished to drive away the thoughts which were ultra-conjugal principles of love.

"Whence comes your sadness, sweet heart?" said he.

"From shame."

"What then affronts you?"

"The not being a good woman; because I am without a child, and you without lineage! Is one a lady without progeny? Nay! look!—all my neighbors have it, and I was married to have it, as you to give it me; the nobles of Touraine are all amply furnished with children, and their wives give them lapfuls. You alone have none; they laugh at you there. What will become of your name and your fiefs and your seigniories? A child is our natural company; it is a delight to us to make a fright of it, to fondle it, to swaddle it, to dress and undress it, to cuddle it, to sing it lullabies, to cradle it, to get it up, to put it to bed, and to nourish it, and I feel that if I had only the half of one, I would kiss it, swaddle it, and unharness it, and I would make it jump and crow all day long, as other ladies do."

"Were it not that in giving them birth women die, and that for this you are still too delicate and too close in the bud, you would be already a mother," replied the seneschal, made giddy with the flow of words. "But will you buy one ready made—that will cost you neither pain nor labor?"

"But," said she, "I want the pain and labor, without which it will not be ours. I know very well it should be the fruit of my body, because at church they say that Jesus was the fruit of the Virgin's womb."

"Very well, then pray God that it may be so," cried the seneschal, "and intercede with the Virgin of Egrignolles. Many a lady has conceived after the novena; you must not fail to do one."

Then the same day Blanche set out toward Notre-Dame de l'Egrignolles, decked out like a queen, riding her beautiful mare, having on a robe of green velvet, laced down with fine gold lace, open at the breast, having sleeves of scarlet, little shoes, and a high hat ornamented with precious stones, and a gold waistband that showed off her little waist, as slim as a pole. She wished to give her dress to Madame the Virgin, and in fact promised it her, for the day of her churching. The Sire de Montsoreau galloped before her, his eye bright as that of a hawk, keeping the people back and guarding with his knights the security of the journey. Near Marmoustiers the seneschal, rendered sleepy by the heat, seeing it was the month of August, wobbled about in his saddle, like a diadem upon the head of a cow, and seeing so frolicsome and so pretty a lady by the side of so old a fellow, a peasant-girl, who was squatting near the trunk of a tree and drinking water out of her stone jug, inquired of a toothless old hag, who picked up a trifle by gleaning, if this princess was going to bury her dead.

"Nay," said the old woman, "it is our lady of Roche-Corbon, wife of the Seneschal of Poictou and Touraine, in quest of a child."

“Ah! ah!” said the young girl, laughing like a fly just satisfied; then pointing to the handsome knight who was at the head of the procession—“he who marches at the head would manage that; she would save the wax-candles and the vow.”

“Ha! my little one,” replied the hag, “I am the rather surprised that she should go to our lady of l’Egrignolles, seeing that there are no handsome priests there. She might very well stop for a short time beneath the shadow of the belfry of Marmoustiers; she would soon be fertile, those good fathers are so lively.”

“By a nun’s oath!” said a tramp, walking up, “look; the Sire de Montsoreau is lively and delicate enough to open the lady’s heart, the more so as he is well formed to do so.”

And all commenced to laugh. The Sire de Montsoreau wished to go to them and hang them to a lime tree by the road as a punishment for their bad words, but Blanche cried out quickly:

“Oh, sir, do not hang them yet. They have not said all they mean; and we shall see them on our return.”

She blushed, and the Sire de Montsoreau looked at her eagerly, as though to shoot into her the mystic comprehensions of love, but the clearing out of her intelligence had already been commenced by the sayings of the peasants, which were fructifying in her understanding—her innocence was like touchwood, there was only need for a word to inflame it.

Thus Blanche perceived now the notable and physical differences between the qualities of her old husband and the perfections of the said Gauttier, a gentleman who was not over-affected with his twenty-three years, but held himself upright as a ninepin in the saddle, and as wide awake as the matin chimes, while, in contrast to him, slept the seneschal; he had courage and dexterity there where his master failed. He was one of those smart fellows whom the jades would

sooner wear at night than a leathern garment, because they then no longer fear the fleas ; there are some who vituperate them, but no one should be blamed, because every one should sleep as he likes.

So much did the seneschal's lady think, and so imperially well, that by the time she arrived at the bridge of Tours, she loved Gauttier secretly, as a maiden loves, without suspecting that it is love. From that she became a proper woman ; that is to say, she desired the good of others, the best that men have ; she fell into a fit of love-sickness, going at the first jump to the depth of her misery, seeing that all is flame between the first coveting and the last desire, and she knew not how she then learned that by the eyes can flow in a subtle essence, causing such powerful corrosions in all the veins of the body, recesses of the heart, nerves of the members, roots of the hair, perspiration of the substance, limbo of the brain, orifices of the epidermis, windings of the pluck, tubes of the hypochondriæ and other channels, which in her were suddenly dilated, heated, tickled, envenomed, clawed, harrowed and disturbed, as if she had a basketful of needles in her inside. This was a maiden's desire, a well-conditioned desire, which troubled her sight to such a degree that she no longer saw her old spouse, but clearly the young Gauttier, whose nature was as ample as the glorious chin of an abbot. When the goodman entered Tours, the *Ah ! Ah !* of the crowd woke him up, and he came with great pomp with his suite to the church of Notre-Dame de l'Egrignolles, formerly called *la greigneur*, as if you said that which has the most merit. Blanche went into the chapel where children are asked of God and of the Virgin, and went there alone, as was the custom, always, however, in presence of the seneschal, of his varlets and the loiterers who remained outside the grill. When the countess saw the priest come who had charge of the masses said for children, and who received the said vows, she asked him if there were many barren women. To which the

good priest replied that he must not complain, and that the children were good revenue to the church.

"And do you often see," said Blanche, "young women with such old husbands as my lord?"

"Rarely," said he.

"But have those obtained offspring?"

"Always," replied the priest, smiling.

"And the others whose companions are not so old?"

"Sometimes."

"Oh! oh!" said she, "there is more certainty then with one like the seneschal?"

"To be sure," said the priest.

"Why?" said she.

"Madame," gravely replied the priest, "before that age God alone interferes with the affair; after, it is the men."

At this time it was a true thing that all the wisdom had gone to the clergy. Blanche made her vow, which was a very profitable one, seeing that her decorations were worth quite two thousand gold crowns.

"You are very joyful!" said the old seneschal to her when on her home journey she made her mare prance, jump, and frisk.

"Yes, yes!" said she. "There is no longer any doubt about my having a child, because any one can help me, the priest said. I shall take Gauttier."

The seneschal wished to go and slay the monk, but he thought that was a crime which would cost him too much, so he resolved cunningly to arrange his vengeance with the help of the archbishop; and before the housetops of Roche-Corbon came in sight he had desired the Sire de Montsoreau to seek a little retirement in his own country, which the young Gauttier did, knowing the ways of his lord. The seneschal put in the place of the said Gauttier the son of the Sire de Jallanges, whose fief was held from Roche-Corbon. He was a young boy named René, approaching fourteen

years, and he made him a page, awaiting the time when he should be old enough to be equerry, and gave the command of his men to an old cripple, with whom he had knocked about a great deal in Palestine and other places. Thus the good man believed he would avoid the horned trappings of cuckoldom, and would still be able to girth, bridle, and curb the factitious innocence of his wife, which struggled like a mule held by a rope.

THAT WHICH IS ONLY A VENIAL SIN.

The Sunday following the arrival of René at the manor of Roche-Corbon, Blanche went out hunting without her good-man, and, when she was in the forest near Les Carneaux, saw a monk who appeared to be pushing a girl about more than was necessary, and spurred on her horse, saying to her people: "Ho there! don't let him kill her." But when the seneschal's lady arrived close to them she turned her horse's head quickly, and the sight she beheld prevented her from hunting. She came back pensive, and then the lantern of her intelligence opened, and received a bright light, which made a thousand things clear, such as church and other pictures, fables, and lays of the troubadours, or the domestic arrangements of birds: suddenly she discovered the sweet mystery of love written in all languages, even in that of the carps'. Is it not silly thus to seal this science from maidens? Soon went Blanche to bed, and said she to the seneschal:

"Bruyn, you have deceived me; you ought to behave as the monk of the Carneaux behaved with the girl."

Old Bruyn suspected the adventure, and saw well that his evil hour was at hand. He regarded Blanche with too much fire in his eyes for the same ardor to be lower down, and answered her softly:

“Alas! sweet heart, in taking you for my wife I had more love than strength, and I have taken advantage of your clemency and virtue. The great sorrow of my life is to feel all my capability in my heart only. This sorrow hastens my death little by little, so that you will soon be free. Wait for my departure from this world. That is the sole request that he makes of you, he who is your master, and who could command you, but who wishes only to be your prime minister and slave. Do not betray the honor of my white hairs. Under these circumstances there have been lords who have slain their wives.”

“Alas! you will not kill me?” said she, for she began to experience fear.

“No,” replied the old man, “I love thee too much, little one; why, thou art the flower of my old age, the joy of my soul. Thou art my well-beloved daughter; the sight of thee does good to mine eyes, and from thee I could endure anything, be it a sorrow or a joy; I give thee full license in everything, provided that thou dost not curse too much the poor Bruyn who has made thee a great lady, rich and honored. Wilt thou not be a lovely widow? And thy happiness will soften the pangs of death.”

And he found in his dried-up eyes still one tear, which trickled quite warm down his fir-cone colored face, and fell upon the hand of Blanche, who, grieved to behold this great love of her old spouse, who would put himself under the ground to please her, said, laughing:

“There! there! don’t cry, I will wait!”

Thereupon the seneschal kissed her hands and regaled her with little endearments, saying with a voice quivering with emotion:

“If you knew, Blanche, my darling, how I devour thee in thy sleep with caresses, now here, now there!” And the old ape patted her with his two hands, which were nothing but bones. And he continued, “I dared not awaken the cat that

would have strangled my happiness, since at this occupation of love I only embraced thee with my heart."

"Ah!" replied she, "you can fondle me thus even when my eyes are open; that has not the least effect upon me."

At these words the poor seneschal, taking the little dagger which was on the table by the bed, gave it to her, saying, with passion:

"My darling, kill me, or let me believe that you love me a little!"

"Yes, yes," said she, quite frightened, "I will try to love you much."

Behold how this young maidenhood made itself master of this old man and subdued him, for in the name of the sweet face of Venus, Blanche, endowed with the natural artfulness of women, made her old Bruyn come and go like a miller's mule.

"My good Bruyn, I want this! Bruyn, I want that—go on, Bruyn!" Bruyn! Bruyn! and always Bruyn in such a way that Bruyn was more worn out by the clemency of his wife than he would have been by her unkindness. She turned his brain, wishing that everything should be in scarlet, making him turn everything topsy-turvy at the least movement of her eyebrow, and when she was sad the seneschal, distracted, would say to everything from his judicial seat: "Hang him!" Another would have died like a fly at this conflict with the maid's innocence, but Bruyn was of such an iron nature that it was difficult to finish him off. One evening that Blanche had turned the house upside-down, upset the men and the beasts, and would by her aggravating humor have made the Eternal Father desperate—he who has such an infinite treasure of patience since he endures us—she said to the seneschal while getting into bed: "My good Bruyn, I have low-down fancies that bite and prick me; thence they rise into my heart, inflame my brain, incite me therein to evil deeds, and in the night I dream of the monk of the Carneaux."

"My dear," replied the seneschal, "these are deviltries and temptations against which the monks and the nuns know how to defend themselves. If you will gain salvation, go and confess to the worthy abbot of Marmoustiers, our neighbor; he will advise you well and will holily direct you in the good way."

"To-morrow I will go," said she.

And, indeed, directly it was day, she trotted off to the monastery of the good brethren, who marveled to see among them so pretty a lady, committed more than one sin through her in the evening, and for the present led her with great ceremony to their reverend abbot.

Blanche found the said good man in a private garden near the high rock under a flowery arcade, and remained stricken with respect at the countenance of the holy man, although she was accustomed not to think much of gray hairs.

"God preserve you, madame; what come you to seek of one so near death, you so young?"

"Your precious advice," said she, saluting him with a curtsy; "and if it will please you to guide so undutiful a sheep, I shall be well content to have so wise a ghostly confessor."

"My daughter," answered the monk, with whom old Bruyn had arranged this hypocrisy and the part to play, "if I had not the chills of a hundred winters upon this unthatched head, I should not dare to listen to your sins, but say on; if you enter paradise, it will be through me."

Then the seneschal's wife set forth the small fry of her stock-in-hand, and when she was purged of her little iniquities, she came to the postscript of her confession.

"Ah, my father!" said she, "I must confess to you that I am daily exercised by the desire to have a child. Is it wrong?"

"No," said the abbot.

But she went on: "It is by nature commanded to my hus-

band not to draw from his wealth to bring about his poverty, as the old women say by the way."

"Then," replied the priest, "you must live virtuously and abstain from all thoughts of this kind."

"But I have heard it professed by the lady of Jallanges that it was not a sin when from it one derived neither profit nor pleasure."

"There always is pleasure," said the abbot, "but don't count upon the child as a profit. Now fix this in your understanding, that it will always be a mortal sin before God and a crime before men to bring forth a child through the embraces of a man to whom one is not ecclesiastically married. Thus those women who offend against the holy laws of marriage suffer great penalties in the other world, are in the power of horrible monsters with sharp and tearing claws, who thrust them into flaming furnaces in remembrance of the fact that here below they have warmed their hearts a little more than was lawful."

Thereupon Blanche scratched her ear, and, having thought to herself for a little while, she said to the priest: "How then did the Virgin Mary?"

"Ah!" replied the abbot, "that is a mystery."

"And what is a mystery?"

"A thing that cannot be explained, and which one ought to believe without inquiring into it."

"Well, then," said she, "cannot I perform a mystery?"

"This one," said the abbot, "only happened once, because it was the Son of God."

"Alas! my father, is it then the will of God that I should die, or that from wise and sound comprehension my brain should be turned? Of this there is great danger. Now in me something moves and excites me and I am no longer in my senses. I care for nothing, and to find a man I would leap the walls, dash over the fields without shame and tear my things into tatters, only to see that which so much excited the

monk of the Carneaux; and during these passions which work and prick my mind and body, there is neither God, devil, nor husband. I spring, I run, I smash up the wash-tubs, the pots, the farm implements, the chicken-coop, the household things, and everything, in a way that I cannot describe. But I dare not confess to you all my misdeeds, because speaking of them makes my mouth water, and the thing with which God curses me makes me itch dreadfully. If this folly bites and pricks me, and slays my virtue, will God, who has placed this great love in my body, condemn me to perdition?"

At this question it was the priest who scratched his ear, quite dumfounded by the lamentations, profound wisdom, controversies, and intelligence that this virginity secreted.

"My daughter," said he, "God has distinguished us from the beasts and made us a paradise to gain, and for this given us reason, which is a rudder to steer us against tempests and our ambitious desires, and there is a means of easing the imaginations in one's brain by fasting, excessive labor, and other virtues; and instead of frisking and fretting like a child let loose from school, you should pray to the Virgin, sleep on a hard board, attend to your household duties, and never be idle."

"Ah! my father, when I am at church in my seat, I see neither the priest nor the altar, only the infant Jesus, who brings the thing into my head. But to finish: if my head is turned and my mind wanders, I am in the lime-twigs of love."

"If you were thus," said the abbot, imprudently, "you would be in the position of Saint Lidoire, who in a deep sleep one day, one leg here and one leg there, through the great heat, and scantily attired, was approached by a young man full of mischief, who dexterously seduced her, and as of this trick the saint was thoroughly ignorant, and much surprised at being brought to bed, thinking that her unusual size was a

serious malady, she did penance for it as a venial sin, as she had no pleasure in this wicked business, according to the statement of the wicked man, who said upon the scaffold where he was executed that the saint had in nowise stirred."

"Oh, my father," said she, "be sure that I should not stir more than she did."

With this statement she went away prettily and gracefully, smiling and thinking how she could commit a venial sin. On her return from the great monastery, she saw in the courtyard of her castle the little Jallanges, who under the superintendence of an old groom was turning and wheeling about on a fine horse, bending with the movements of the animal, dismounting, and mounting again by vaults and leaps most gracefully; and with lissome thighs, so pretty, so dexterous, so upright, as to be indescribable, so much so, that he would have made the Queen Lucretia long for him, she who killed herself from being contaminated by Sextus against her will.

"Ah!" said Blanche, "if only this page were fifteen, I would go to sleep comfortably very near to him."

Then, in spite of the too great youth of this charming servitor, during the collation and supper, she frequently eyed the black hair, the white skin, the grace of René, above all his eyes, where was an abundance of limpid warmth and a great fire of life, which he was afraid to shoot out—child that he was.

Now in the evening, as the seneschal's wife sat thoughtfully in her chair in the corner of the fire-place, old Bruyn interrogated her as to her trouble.

"I am thinking," said she, "that you must have fought the battles of love very early, to be thus completely broken down."

"Oh!" replied he, smiling like all old men questioned upon their amorous remembrances, "at the age of thirteen and a half I had overcome the scruples of my mother's waiting-woman."

Blanche wished to hear nothing more, but believed the page René should be equally advanced, and she was quite joyous, and practiced little allurements on the goodman, and wallowed silently in her desire, like a cake which is being floured.

HOW AND BY WHOM THE SAID CHILD WAS PROCURED.

The seneschal's wife did not think long over the best way to quickly awaken the love of the page, and had soon discovered the natural ambuscade in the which the most wary are taken. This is how: at the warmest hour of the day the goodman took his siesta after the Saracen fashion, a habit in which he had never failed since his return from the Holy Land. During this time Blanche was alone in the grounds, where the women work at their minor occupations, such as broidering and sewing, and often remained in the rooms looking after the washing, putting the clothes tidy, or running about at will. Then she appointed this quiet hour to complete the education of the page, making him read books and say his prayers. Now on the morrow, when at the midday hour the seneschal slept, succumbing to the sun which warms with its most luminous rays the slopes of Roche-Corbon, so much so that one is obliged to sleep, unless annoyed, upset, and continually roused by a devil of a young woman. Blanche then gracefully perched herself in the great seignorial chair of her goodman, which she did not find any too high, since she counted upon the chances of perspective. The cunning jade settled herself dexterously therein, like a swallow in its nest, and leaned her head maliciously upon her arm like a child that sleeps; but, in making her preparations, she opened fond eyes, that smiled and winked in advance of the

little secret thrills, sneezes, squints, and trances of the page who was about to lie at her feet, separated from her by the jump of an old flea; and, in fact, she advanced so much and so near the square of velvet where the poor child should kneel, whose life and soul she trifled with, that, had he been a saint of stone, his glance would have been constrained to follow the flexuosities of the dress in order to admire and readmire the perfections and beauties of the shapely leg, which moulded the white stocking of the seneschal's lady. Thus it was certain that a weak varlet would be taken in a snare, wherein the most vigorous knight would willingly have succumbed. When she had turned, returned, placed, and displaced her body, and found the situation in which the page would be most comfortable, she cried, gently: "René!" René, whom she well knew was in the guard-room, did not fail to run in and quickly thrust his brown head between the tapestries of the door.

"What do you please to wish?" said the page. And he held with great respect in his hand his shaggy scarlet cap, less red than his fresh, dimpled cheeks.

"Come hither," replied she, under her breath, for the child attracted her so strongly that she was at once quite overcome.

And forsooth there were no jewels so sparkling as the eyes of René, no vellum whiter than his skin, no woman more exquisite in shape—and so near to her desire, she found him still more sweetly formed—and was certain that the merry frolics of love would radiate well from all this youth, the warm sun, the silence, *et cetera*.

"Read me the litanies of Madame the Virgin," said she to him, pushing an open book to him on her prie-Dieu. "Let me see if you are well taught by your master.

"Do you not think the Virgin beautiful?" asked she of him, smiling when he held the illuminated prayer-book in which glowed the silver and the gold.

"It is a painting," replied he, timidly, and casting a little glance upon his so gracious mistress.

"Read! read!"

Then René began to recite the so sweet and so mystic litanies; but you may imagine that the "*Ora pro nobis*" of Blanche became still fainter and fainter, like the sound of the horn in the woodlands, and when the page went on, "Oh, Rose of mystery," the lady, who certainly heard distinctly, replied by a gentle sigh. Thereupon René suspected that his mistress slept. Then he commenced to cover her with his regard, admiring her at his leisure, and had then no wish to utter any anthem save the anthem of love. His happiness made his heart leap and bound into his throat; thus, as was but natural, these two innocences burned one against the other, but if they could have foreseen never would have intermingled. René feasted his eyes, planning in his mind a thousand fruitions of love that brought the water into his mouth. In his ecstasy he let his book fall, which made him feel as sheepish as a monk surprised at a child's tricks; but also from that he knew that Blanche was sound asleep, for she did not stir, and the wily jade would not have opened her eyes even at the greatest dangers, and reckoned on something else falling as well as the book of prayer.

There is no worse longing than the longing of woman in a certain condition. Now, the page noticed his lady's foot, which was delicately slippered in a little laced shoe of a delicate blue color. She had angularly placed it on a footstool, since she was too high in the seneschal's chair. This foot was of narrow proportions, delicately curved, as broad as two fingers, and as long as a sparrow, tail included, small at the top—a true foot of delight, a virginal foot that merited a kiss as a robber does the gallows; a roguish foot; a foot wanton enough to damn an archangel; an ominous foot; a devilishly enticing foot, which gave one a desire to make two new ones just like it to perpetuate in this lower world the

glorious works of God. The page was tempted to take the shoe from this persuasive foot. To accomplish this his eyes, glowing with the fire of his age, went swiftly, like the clapper of a bell, from this said foot of delectation to the sleeping countenance of his lady and mistress, listening to her slumber, drinking in her respiration again and again, and did not know where it would be sweetest to plant a kiss—whether on the ripe red lips of the seneschal's wife or on this speaking foot. At length from respect or fear, or perhaps from great love, he chose the foot, and kissed it hastily, like a maiden who dares not. Then immediately he took up his book, feeling his red cheeks redder still, and exercised with his pleasure, he cried like a blind man—“*Janua cœli*, gate of heaven.” But Blanche did not move, making sure that the page would go from foot to knee, and thence to “*Janua cœli*, the gate of heaven.” She was greatly disappointed when the litanies finished without any other mischief, and René, believing he had had enough happiness for one day, ran out of the room quite lively, richer from this hardy kiss than a robber who has robbed the poor-box.

When the seneschal's lady was alone, she thought to herself that the page would be rather a long time at his task if he amused himself with singing of the *Magnificat* at matins. Thus she determined on the morrow to raise her foot a little, and then to bring to light those hidden beauties that are called perfect in Touraine, because they take no hurt in the open air, and are always fresh. You can imagine that the page, burned by his desire and his imagination, heated by the day before, awaited impatiently the hour to read in this breviary of gallantry, and was called; and the conspiracy of the litanies commenced again, and Blanche did not fail to fall asleep. This time the said René fondled with his hand the pretty limb, and even ventured so far as to verify if the polished knee and its surroundings were satin. At this sight the poor child, armed against his desire, so great was his fear,

dared only make brief devotion and curt caresses, and, although he kissed softly this fair surface, he remained bashful, the which, feeling by the senses of her soul and intelligence of her body, the seneschal's lady who took great care not to move, called out to him—"Ah, René, I am asleep."

Hearing what he believed to be a stern reproach, the page, frightened, ran away, leaving the books, the task, and all. Thereupon, the seneschal's better half added this prayer to the litany—"Holy Virgin, how difficult children are to make!"

At dinner her page perspired all down his back while waiting on his lady and her lord; but he was very much surprised when he received from Blanche the most shameless of all glances that ever woman cast, and very pleasant and powerful it was, seeing that it changed this child into a man of courage. Now, the same evening, Bruyn staying a little longer than was his custom in his own apartment, the page went in search of Blanche, and found her asleep, and made her dream a beautiful dream.

He knocked off the chains that weighed so heavily upon her, and so plentifully bestowed upon her the sweets of love, that the surplus would have sufficed to render two others blessed with the joys of maternity. So then the minx, seizing the page by the head and squeezing him to her, cried out—"Oh, René! thou hast awakened me!"

And, in fact, there was no sleep could stand against it, and it is certain that saints must sleep very soundly. From this business, without other mystery, and by a benign faculty which is the assisting principle of spouses, the sweet and graceful plumage, suitable to cuckolds, was placed upon the head of the good husband without his experiencing the slightest shock.

After this sweet repast, the seneschal's lady took kindly to her siesta after the French fashion, while Bruyn took his according to the Saracen. But by the said siesta she learned

how the good youth of the page had a better taste than that of the old seneschal, and at night she buried herself in the sheets far away from her husband, whom she found strong and stale. And from sleeping and waking up in the day, from taking siestas and saying litanies, the seneschal's wife felt growing within her that treasure for which she had so often and so ardently sighed; but now she liked more the commencement than the fructifying of it.

You may be sure that René knew how to read, not only in books, but in the eyes of his sweet lady, for whom he would have leaped into a flaming pile, had it been her wish he should do so. When well and amply, more than a hundred times, the train had been laid by them, the little lady became anxious about her soul and the future of her friend the page. Now one rainy day, as they were playing at touch-tag, like two children, innocent from head to foot, Blanche, who was always caught, said to him:

"Come here, René; do you know that while I have committed only venial sins because I was asleep, you have committed mortal ones?"

"Ah, madame!" said he, "where then will God stow away all the damned if that is to sin?"

Blanche burst out laughing, and kissed his forehead and embraced him.

"Be quiet, you naughty boy; it is a question of paradise, and we must live there together if you wish always to be with me."

"Oh, my paradise is here."

"Leave off," said she. "You are a little wretch—a scapegrace who does not think of that which I love—yourself! You do not know that I am with child, and that in a little while I shall be no more able to conceal it than my nose. Now, what will the abbot say? What will my lord say? He will kill you if he puts himself in a passion. My advice is, little one, that you go to the abbot of Marmoustiers, confess

your sins to him, asking him to say what had better be done concerning my seneschal."

"Alas," said the artful page, "if I tell the secret of our joys, he will put his interdict upon our love."

"Very likely," said she; "but thy happiness in the other world is a thing so precious to me."

"Do you wish it, my darling?"

"Yes," replied she, rather faintly.

"Well, I will go, but sleep again that I may bid thee adieu."

And the couple recited the litany of Farewells as if they had both foreseen that their love must finish in its April. And on the morrow, more to save his dear lady than to save himself, and also to obey her, René de Jallanges set out toward the great monastery.

HOW THE SAID LOVE-SIN WAS REPENTED OF AND LED TO GREAT MOURNING.

"Good God!" cried the abbot, when the page had chanted the *kyrie eleison* of his sweet sins, "thou art the accomplice of a great felony, and thou hast betrayed thy lord. Dost thou know, page of darkness, that for this thou wilt burn through all eternity? and dost thou know what it is to lose forever the heaven above for a perishable and changeable moment here below? Unhappy wretch! I see thee precipitated forever in the gulfs of hell unless thou payest to God in this world that which thou owest him for such offense."

Thereupon, the good old abbot, who was of that flesh of which saints are made, and who had great authority in the country of Touraine, terrified the young man by a heap of representations, Christian discourses, remembrances of the commandments of the church, and a thousand eloquent things—as many as a devil could say in six weeks to seduce a

maiden—but so many that René, who was in the loyal fervor of innocence, made his submission to the good abbot. The said abbot, wishing to make forever a good and virtuous man of this child, now in a fair way to be a wicked one, commanded him first to go and prostrate himself before his lord, to confess his conduct to him, and then if he escaped from this confession, to depart instantly for the Crusades, and go straight to the Holy Land, where he should remain fifteen years of the time appointed to give battle to the infidels.

“Alas! reverend father,” said he, quite unmoved, “will fifteen years be enough to acquit me of so much pleasure? Ah! if you but knew, I have had joy enough for a thousand years.”

“God will be generous. Go,” replied the old abbot, “and sin no more. On this account *ego te absolvo*” (thou art absolved).

Poor René returned thereupon with great contrition to the castle of Roche-Corbon, and the first person he met was the seneschal, who was polishing up his arms, helmets, gauntlets, and other things. He was sitting on a great marble bench in the open air, and was amusing himself by making shine again the splendid trappings which brought back to him the merry pranks in the Holy Land, the good jokes, and the wenches, *et cetera*. When René fell upon his knees before him, the good lord was much astonished.

“What is it?” said he.

“My lord,” replied René, “order these people to retire.”

Which the servants having done, the page confessed his fault, recounted how he had assailed his lady in her sleep, and that for certain he had made her a mother in imitation of the man and the saint, and came by order of the confessor to put himself at the disposition of the offended person. Having said which, René de Jallanges cast down his lovely eyes, which had produced all the mischief, and remained abashed, prostrate without fear, his arms hanging down, his

head bare, awaiting his punishment, and humbling himself to God. The seneschal was not so white that he could not become whiter, and now he blanched like linen newly dried, remaining dumb with passion. And this old man, who had not in his veins the vital force necessary to procreate a child, found in this moment of fury more vigor than was necessary to undo a man. He seized with his hairy right hand his heavy club, lifted it, brandished it and adjusted it so easily that you could have thought it a bowl at a game of skittles, to bring it down upon the pale forehead of the said René, who, knowing that he was greatly in fault toward his lord, remained placid, and, stretching his neck, thought that he was about to expiate his sin for his sweetheart in this world and in the other.

But his fair youth, and all the natural seductions of this sweet crime, found grace before the tribunal of the heart of this old man, although Bruyn was still severe, and throwing his club away on to a dog who was catching beetles, he cried out: "May a thousand million claws tear, during all eternity, all the entrils of him, who made him, who planted the oak, that made the chair, on which thou hast antlered me—and the same to those who engendered thee, cursed page of misfortune! Get thee to the devil, whence thou camest—go out from before me, from the castle, from the country, and stay not here one moment more than is necessary, otherwise I will surely prepare for thee a death by slow fire that shall make thee curse twenty times an hour thy villainous and ribald partner!"

Hearing the commencement of these little speeches of the seneschal, whose youth came back in his oaths, the page ran away, escaping the rest: and he did well. Bruyn, burning with a fierce rage, gained the gardens speedily, reviling everything by the way, striking and swearing; he even knocked over three large pans held by one of his servants, who was carrying the mess to the dogs, and he was so beside himself

that he would have killed a laborer for a "thank you." He soon perceived his unmaidenly maiden, who was looking toward the road to the monastery, waiting for the page, and unaware that she would never see him again.

"Ah, my lady! by the devil's three-pronged red fork, am I a swallower of tarrididdles and a child, to believe that you are so fashioned that a page can behave in this manner and you not know it? By the death! By the head! By the blood!"

"Hold!" she replied, seeing that the mine was sprung, "I knew it well enough, but as you had not instructed me in these matters I thought that I was dreaming!"

The great ire of the seneschal melted like snow in the sun, for the direst anger of God himself would have vanished at a smile from Blanche.

"May a thousand million of devils carry off this alien child! I swear that——"

"There! there! do not swear," said she. "If it is not yours, it is mine; and the other night did you not tell me you loved everything that came from me?"

Thereupon she ran on with such a lot of arguments, hard words, complaints, quarrels, tears, and other paternosters of women; such as—firstly, the estates would not have to be returned to the King; that never had a child been brought more innocently into the world; that this, that that, a thousand things; until the good cuckold relented, and Blanche, seizing a propitious interruption, said:

"And where is the page?"

"Gone to the devil!"

"What, have you killed him?" said she. She turned pale and tottered.

Bruyn did not know what would become of him when he saw thus fall all the happiness of his old age, and he would to save her have shown her the page. He ordered him to be sought, but René had run off at full speed, fearing he

should be killed ; and departed for the lands beyond the seas, in order to accomplish his vow of religion. When Blanche had learned from the above-mentioned abbot the penitence imposed upon her well-beloved, she fell into a state of great melancholy, saying at times : “ Where is he, the poor unfortunate, who is in the middle of great dangers for love of me ? ”

And always kept on asking, like a child who gives its mother no rest until its request be granted it. At these lamentations the poor seneschal, feeling himself to blame, endeavored to do a thousand things, putting one out of the question, in order to make Blanche happy ; but nothing was equal to the sweet caresses of the page. However, she had one day the child so much desired. You may be sure that was a fine festival for the good cuckold, for the resemblance to the father was distinctly engraved upon the face of this sweet fruit of love. Blanche consoled herself greatly, and picked up again a little of her old gayety and flowers of innocence, which rejoiced the aged hours of the seneschal. From constantly seeing the little one run about, watching its laughs answer those of the countess, he finished by loving it, and would have been in a great rage with any one who had not believed him its father.

Now as the adventure of Blanche and her page had not been carried beyond the castle, it was related throughout Touraine that Messire Bruyn had still found himself sufficiently in funds to afford a child. Intact remained the virtue of Blanche, and by the quintessence of instruction drawn by her from the natural reservoir of women, she recognized how necessary it was to be silent concerning the venial sin with which her child was covered. So she became modest and good, and was cited as a virtuous person. And then, to make use of him, she experimented on the goodness of her goodman, and without giving him leave to go farther than her chin, since she looked upon herself as belonging to René, Blanche, in return for the

flowers of age which Bruyn offered her, coddled him, smiled upon him, kept him merry, and fondled him with pretty ways and tricks, which good wives bestow upon the husbands they deceive; and all so well that the seneschal did not wish to die, squatted comfortably in his chair, and the more he lived the more he became partial to life. But to be brief, one night he died without knowing where he was going, for he said to Blanche: "Ho! ho! my dear, I see thee no longer! Is it night?"

It was the death of the just, and he had well merited it as a reward for his labors in the Holy Land.

Blanche held for this death a great and true mourning, weeping for him as one weeps for one's father. She remained melancholy, without wishing to lend her ear to the music of a second wedding, for which she was praised by all good people, who knew not that she had a husband in her heart, a life in hope; but she was the greater part of her time widow in fact and widow in heart, because hearing no news of her lover at the Crusades, the poor countess reputed him dead, and during certain nights, seeing him wounded and lying at full length, she would wake up in tears. She lived thus for fourteen years in the remembrance of one day of happiness. Finally, one day, when she had with her certain ladies of Touraine, and they were talking together after dinner, behold her little boy, who was at that time about thirteen and a half, and resembled René more than it is allowable for a child to resemble his father, and had nothing of the Sire Bruyn about him but his name—behold the little one, a madcap and pretty like his mother, who came in from the garden, running, perspiring, panting, jumping, scattering all things in his way, after the manner and custom of infancy, and who ran straight to his well-beloved mother, jumped into her lap, and, interrupting the conversation, cried out:

"Oh, mother, I want to speak to you. I have seen in the courtyard a pilgrim, who squeezed me very tight."

“Ah!” cried the chatelaine, hurrying toward one of the servants who had charge of the young count and watched over his precious days, “I have forbidden you ever to leave my son in the hands of strangers, not even in those of the holiest man in the world. You quit my service.”

“Alas! my lady,” replied the old equerry, quite overcome, “this one wished him no harm, for he wept while kissing him passionately.”

“He wept?” said she; “ah! it’s his father.”

Having said which, she leaned her head upon the chair in which she was sitting, and which you may be sure was the chair in which she had sinned.

Hearing these strange words, the ladies were so surprised that at first they did not perceive that the seneschal’s widow was dead, without its ever being known if her sudden death was caused by her sorrow at the departure of her lover, who, faithful to his vow, did not wish to see her, or from great joy at his return and the hope of getting the interdict removed which the abbot of Marmoustiers had placed upon their loves. And there was great mourning for her, for the Sire de Jallanges lost his spirits when he saw his lady laid in the ground, and became a monk of Marmoustiers, which at that time was called by some Maimoustier, as much as to say *Maius Monasterium*, the largest monastery, and it was indeed the finest in all France.



THE KING'S SWEETHEART.

THERE lived at this time, at the forges of the Pont au Change, a goldsmith whose daughter was talked about in Paris on account of her great beauty, and renowned above all things for her exceeding gracefulness. There were those who sought her favors by the usual tricks of love, but others offered large sums of money to the father to give them his daughter in lawful wedlock, the which pleased him not a little.

One of his neighbors, a parliamentary advocate, who by selling his cunning devices to the public had acquired as many lands as a dog has fleas, took it into his head to offer the said father a domain in consideration of his consent to this marriage, which he ardently desired to undertake. To this arrangement our goldsmith was nothing loath. He bargained away his daughter, without taking into consideration the fact that her patched-up old suitor had the features of an ape, and had scarcely a tooth in his jaws. The smell which emanated from his mouth did not, however, disturb his own nostrils, although he was filthy and high-flavored, as are all those who pass their lives amid the smoke of chimneys, yellow parchment, and other black proceedings. Immediately the sweet girl saw him she exclaimed: "Great heavens! I would rather not have him."

"That concerns me not," said the father, who had taken a violent fancy to the proffered domain. "I give him to you for a husband. You must get on as well as you can together. That is his business now, and his duty is to make himself agreeable to you."

"Is it so?" said she. "Well, then, before I obey your orders, I'll let him know what he may expect."

And the same evening, after supper, when the love-sick

man of law was pleading his cause, telling her he was mad for her, and promising her a life of éase and luxury, she, taking him up, quickly remarked :

“ My father has sold me to you, but if you take me, you will make a bad bargain, seeing that I would rather offer myself to the passer-by than to you. I promise you a disloyalty that shall only finish with death—yours or mine.”

Then she began to weep, like all young maidens will before they become experienced, for afterward they never cry with their eyes. The good advocate took this strange behavior for one of those artifices by which the women seek to fan the flames of love and turn the devotion of their admirers into the more tender caress and more daring osculation that speak a husband's right. So that the knave took little notice of it, but, laughing at the complaints of the charming creature, asked her to fix the day.

“ To-morrow,” replied she, “ for the sooner this odious marriage takes place, the sooner I shall be free to have gallants and to lead the gay life of those who love where it pleases them.”

Thereupon this foolish fellow—as firmly fixed as a fly in a glue-pot—went away, made his preparations, spoke at the palace, ran to the High Court, bought dispensations, and conducted his purchase more quickly than he had ever done one before, thinking only of the lovely girl. Meanwhile, the King, who had just returned from a journey, heard nothing spoken of at Court but the marvelous beauty of the jeweler's daughter who had refused a thousand crowns from this one, snubbed that one ; in fact, would yield to no one, but turned up her nose at the finest young men of the city, gentlemen who would have forfeited their seat in paradise only to possess one day this little dragon of virtue.

The King, who was a good judge of such game, strolled into the town, passed the forges, and entered the goldsmith's store, for the purpose of buying jewels for the lady of his

heart, but at the same time to bargain for the most precious jewel in the store. The King not taking a fancy to the jewels, or they not being to his taste, the goodman looked in a secret drawer for a big white diamond.

“Sweet heart,” said he, to the daughter, while her father’s nose was buried in the drawer, “sweet heart, you were not made to sell precious stones, but to receive them, and if you were to give me all the little rings in the place to choose from, I know one here that many are mad for ; that pleases me ; to which I should ever be subject and servant ; and whose price the whole kingdom of France could never pay.”

“Ah, sire !” replied the maid, “I shall be married to-morrow, but if you will lend me the dagger that is in your belt, I will defend my honor, and you shall take it, that the Gospel may be observed wherein it says: ‘Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s.’”

Immediately the King gave her the little dagger, and her brave reply rendered him so amorous that he lost his appetite. He had an apartment prepared, intending to lodge his new lady-love in the Rue à l’Hirundelle, in one of his palaces.

And now behold my advocate, in a great hurry to get married, to the disgust of his rivals, leading his bride to the altar to the clang of bells and the sound of music, so timed as to provoke the qualms of diarrhœa. In the evening, after the ball, comes he into the nuptial chamber, where should be reposing his lovely bride. No longer is she a lovely bride—but a fury—a wild she-devil, who, seated in an armchair, refuses her share of her lord’s couch, and sits defiantly before the fire warming at the same time her ire and her calves. The good husband, quite astonished, kneels down gently before her, inviting her to the first passage of arms in that charming battle which heralds a first night of love ; but she utters not a word, and when he tries to raise her garment, only just to glance

at the charms that have cost him so dear, she gives him a slap that makes his bones rattle, and refuses to utter a syllable.

This amusement, however, by no means displeased our friend the advocate, who saw at the end of his troubles that which you can as well imagine as did he; so played he his share of the game manfully, taking cheerfully the punishment bestowed upon him. By so much hustling about, scuffling, and struggling he managed at last to tear away a sleeve, to slit a petticoat, until he was able to place his hand upon his own property. This bold endeavor brought madame to her feet, and drawing the King's dagger: "What would you with me?" she cried.

"Everything," answered he.

"Ha! I should be a great fool to give myself against my inclination! If you fancied you would find my virtue unarmed you made a great error. Behold the poniard of the King, with which I will kill you if you make the semblance of a step toward me."

So saying she took a cinder, and, having still her eye upon her lord, she drew a circle on the floor, adding: "These are the confines of the King's domain. Beware how you pass them."

The advocate, with whose ideas of love-making the dagger sadly interfered, stood quite discomfited, but at the same time he heard the cruel speech of his tormentor he caught sight through the slits and tears in her robe of a sweet sample of a plump white thigh, and such voluptuous specimens of hidden mysteries, *et cetera*, that death seemed sweet to him if he could only taste of them a little. So that he rushed within the domain of the King, saying, "I mind not death." In fact, he came with such force that his charmer fell backward on the bed, but keeping her presence of mind she defended herself so gallantly that the advocate enjoyed no further advantage than a knock at the door that would not admit him, and he

gained as well a little stab from the poniard which did not wound him deeply, so that it did not cost him very dearly, his attack upon the realm of his sovereign. But maddened with this slight advantage, he cried: "I cannot live without the possession of that lovely body, and those marvels of love. Kill me then!"

And again he attacked the royal preserves. The young beauty, whose head was full of the King, was not even touched by this great love, and said gravely: "If you menace me further, it is not you but myself I will kill." She glared at him so savagely that the poor man was quite terrified, and commenced to deplore the evil hour in which he had taken her to wife, and thus the night which should have been so joyous was passed in tears, lamentations, prayers, and ejaculations. In vain he tempted her with promises; she should eat out of gold, she should be a great lady, he would buy houses and lands for her. Oh! if she would only let him break one lance with her in the sweet conflict of love, he would leave her forever and pass the remainder of his life according to her fantasy. But she, still unyielding, said she would permit him to die, and that was the only thing he could do to please her.

"I have not deceived you," said she. "Agreeable to my promise, I shall give myself to the King, making you a present of the peddlers, chance passers, and street loungers with whom I threatened you."

When the day broke she put on her wedding-garments and waited patiently till the poor husband had to depart to his offices on clients' business, and then ran out into the town to seek the King. But she had not gone a bow-shot from the house before one of the King's servants, who had watched the house from dawn, stopped her with the question:

"Do you not seek the King?"

"Yes," said she.

"Good! Then allow me to be your good friend," said the

subtle courtier. "I ask your aid and protection, as now I give you mine."

With that he told her what kind of a man the King was, which was his weak side, that he was passionate one day and silent the next, that she would be luxuriously lodged and well kept, but that she must keep the King well in hand; in short, he chatted so pleasantly that the time passed quickly until she found herself in the *Hôtel de l'Hirundelle*, where afterward lived *Madame d'Estampes*. The poor husband shed scalding tears, when he found his little bird had flown, and became melancholy and pensive. His friends and neighbors edified his ears with as many taunts and jeers as *Saint-Jacques** had the honor of receiving in *Compostella*, but the poor fellow took it so to heart that at last they tried rather to assuage his grief. These artful compeers, by a species of legal chicanery, decreed that the goodman was not a cuckold, seeing that his wife had refused a consummation, and if the planter of horns had been any one but the King, the said marriage might have been dissolved; but the amorous spouse was wretched unto death at my lady's trick. However, he left her to the King, determining one day to have her to himself, and thinking that a life-long shame would not be too dear a payment for a night with her. One must love well to love like that, eh? and there are many worldly ones, who mock at such affection. But he, still thinking of her, neglected his cases and his clients, his robberies and everything. He went to the palace like a miser searching for a lost sixpence, bowed down, melancholy, and absent-minded, so much so that one day he relieved himself against the robe of a counselor, believing all the while he stood against a wall. Meanwhile, the beautiful girl was loved night and day by the King, who could not tear himself from her embraces, because in amorous play she was so excellent, knowing as well how to fan the flame of love as to extinguish it—to-day snubbing

* *Santiago* (St. James) de *Compostella*; the patron saint of Spain.

him, to-morrow petting him, never the same, and with it a thousand little tricks to charm an ardent lover.

A lord of Bridoré killed himself through her, because she would not receive his embraces, although he offered her his land, Bridoré in Touraine. Of those gallants of Touraine, who gave an estate for one tilt with love's lance, there are none left. This death made the fair one sad, and since her confessor laid the blame of it upon her, she determined for the future to accept all domains and secretly ease their owners' amorous pains for the better saving of their souls from perdition. 'Twas thus she commenced to build up that great fortune which made her a person of consideration in the town. By this means she prevented many gallant gentlemen from perishing, playing her game so well, and inventing such fine stories, that his majesty little guessed how much she aided him in securing the happiness of his subjects. The fact is, she had such a hold over him that she could have made him believe the floor was the ceiling, which was perhaps easier for him to think than any one else, seeing that in the Rue à Hirundelle my lord king passed the greater portion of his time embracing her always as though he would see if such a lovely article would wear away; but he wore himself out first, poor man, seeing that he eventually died from excess of love. Although she took care to grant her favors only to the best and noblest in the court, and that such occasions were rare as miracles, there were not wanting those among her enemies and rivals who declared that for ten thousand crowns a simple noble might taste the pleasures of his King, which was false above all falseness, for, when her lord taxed her with it, did she not reply: "Abominable wretches! curse the devils who put this idea in your head! I never yet did have man who spent less than thirty thousand crowns upon me."

The King, although vexed, could not repress a smile, and kept her on a month to silence scandal. At last, la Demoiselle de Pisseleu, anxious to obtain her place, brought about her ruin.

Many would have liked to be ruined in the same way, seeing she was taken by a young lord who was happy with her, the fires of love in her being still unquenched. But to take up my thread again: One day that the King's sweetheart was passing through the town in her litter to buy laces, furs, velvets, broderies, and other ammunition, and so charmingly attired, and looking so lovely, that any one, especially the clerks, would have believed the heavens were open above them, behold, her goodman, who comes upon her near the old cross. She, at that time lazily swinging her charming little foot over the side of the litter, drew in her head as though she had seen an adder. She was a good wife, for I know some who would have proudly passed their husbands, to their shame and to the great disrespect of conjugal rights.

"What is the matter?" asked one M. de Lannoy, who humbly accompanied her.

"Nothing," she whispered; "but that person is my husband. Poor man! how changed he looks. Formerly he was the picture of a monkey; to-day he is the very image of Job."

The poor advocate stood open-mouthed. His heart beat rapidly at the sight of that little foot—of that wife so wildly loved.

Observing which, the Sire de Lannoy said to him, with courtly insolence:

"If you are her husband, is that any reason you should stop her passage?"

At this she burst out laughing, and the good husband, instead of killing her bravely, shed scalding tears at that laugh which pierced his heart, his soul, his everything, so much that he nearly tumbled over an old citizen whom the sight of the King's sweetheart had driven against the wall. The aspect of this sweet flower, which had been his in the bud, but far from him had spread its lovely leaves; of the fairy figure, the voluptuous bust—all this made the poor advocate more

wretched and more mad for her than it is possible to express in words. You must have been madly in love with a woman who refused your advances thoroughly to understand the agony of this unhappy man. Rare indeed is it to be so infatuated as was he. He swore that life, fortune, honor—all might go, but that for once at least he would be flesh to flesh with her, and make so grand a repast off her dainty body as would suffice him all his life. He passed the night saying: "Oh, yes; ah! I'll have her!" and "Curses, am I not her husband?" and "devil take me," striking himself on the forehead and tossing about. There are chances and occasions which occur so opportunely in this world that little-minded men refuse them credence, saying they are supernatural, but men of high intellect know them to be true because they could not be invented. One of the chances came to the poor advocate, even the day after that terrible one which had been so sore a trial to him. One of his clients, a man of good renown, who had audiences with the King, came one morning to the advocate, saying that he required immediately a large sum of money, about twelve thousand crowns. To which the artful fellow replied, twelve thousand crowns were not so often met at the corner of a street as that which often is seen at the corner of a street; that beside the sureties and guarantees of interest, it was necessary to find a man who had about him twelve thousand crowns, and that these gentlemen were not numerous in Paris, big city as it was, and various other things of a like character the man of cunning remarked.

"Is it true, my lord, that you have a hungry and relentless creditor?" said he.

"Yes, yes," replied the other, "it concerns the mistress of the King. Don't breathe a syllable; but this evening, in consideration of twenty thousand crowns, and my domain of le Brie, I shall take her measure."

Upon this the advocate blanched, and the courtier perceived he touched a tender point. As he had only lately

returned from the wars, he did not know that the lovely woman adored by the King had a husband.

"You appear ill," he said.

"I have a fever," replied the knave.

"But is it to her that you give the contract and the money?"

"Yes."

"Who then manages the bargain, is it she also?"

"No," said the noble; "her little arrangements are concluded through a servant of hers, the cleverest little ladies'-maid that ever was. She's sharper than mustard, and these nights stolen from the King have lined her pockets well."

"I know a Lombard who could accommodate you. But nothing can be done; of the twelve thousand crowns you shall not have a brass farthing if this same ladies'-maid does not come here to take the price of the article that is so great an alchemist, that turns blood into gold, by heaven!"

"It will be a good trick to make her sign the receipt," replied the lord, laughing.

The servant came faithfully to the rendezvous with the advocate, who had begged the lord to bring her. The ducats looked bright and beautiful. There they lay, all in a row, like nuns going to vespers. Spread out upon the table they would have made a donkey smile, even if he were being gutted alive; so lovely, so splendid, were those brave, noble young piles. The good advocate, however, had prepared this view for no ass, for the little handmaiden looked longingly at the golden heap, and muttered a prayer at the sight of them. Seeing which, the husband whispered in her ear these golden words: "These are for you."

"Ah!" said she; "I have never been so well paid."

"My dear," replied the goodman, "you shall have them without being troubled with me;" and, turning her around, "Your client has not told you who I am, eh? No? Learn, then, I am the husband of the lady whom the King has

debauched, and whom you serve. Carry her these crowns, and come back here. I will hand over yours to you on a condition which will be to your taste."

The servant did as she was bidden, and being very curious to know how she could get twelve thousand crowns without sleeping with the advocate, was very soon back again.

"Now, my little one," said he, "here are twelve thousand crowns. With that sum I could buy lands, men, women, and the conscience of three priests at least; so that I believe if I give it you I can have you—body, soul, and toe-nails. And I shall have faith in you like an advocate. I expect that you will go to the lord who expects to pass the night with my wife, and you will deceive him, by telling him that the King is coming to supper with her, and that to-night he must seek his little amusements elsewhere. By so doing I shall be able to take his place and the King's."

"But how?" said she.

"Oh!" replied he, "I have bought you, you and your tricks. You won't have to look at these crowns twice without finding me a way to have my wife. In bringing this conjunction about you commit no sin. It is a work of piety to bring together two people whose hands only have been put one into the other, and that by the priest."

"By my faith, come," said she; "after supper the lights will be put out, and you can enjoy madame if you remain silent. Luckily, on these joyful occasions she cries more than she speaks, and asks questions with her hands alone, for she is very modest, and does not like loose jokes, like the ladies of the Court."

"Oh," cried the advocate, "look! take the twelve thousand crowns, and I promise you twice as much more if I get by fraud that which belongs to me by right."

Then he arranged the hour, the door, the signal, and all; and the servant went away, bearing with her on the back of the mules the golden treasure wrung by fraud and trickery

from the widow and the orphan, and they were all going to that place where everything goes—save our lives, which come from it. Now behold my advocate, who shaves himself, scents himself, goes without onions for dinner that his breath may be sweet, and does everything to make himself as presentable as a gallant signor. He gives himself the airs of a young dandy, tries to be lithe and frisky and to disguise his ugly face; he might try all he knew, he always smelt of the musty lawyer. He was not so clever as the pretty washerwoman of Portillon, who, one day wishing to appear at her best before one of her lovers, got rid of a disagreeable odor in a manner well known to young women of an inventive turn of mind. But our crafty fellow fancied himself the nicest man in the world, although in spite of his drugs and perfumes he was really the nastiest. He dressed himself in his thinnest clothes, although the cold pinched him like a rope collar, and sallied forth, quickly gaining the Rue à l'Hirundelle. There he had to wait some time. But just as he was beginning to think he had been made a fool of, and just as it was quite dark, the maid came down and opened the door to him, and the good husband slipped gleefully into the King's apartment. The girl locked him carefully in a cupboard that was close to his wife's bed, and through a crack he feasted his eyes upon her beauty, for she undressed herself before the fire, and put on a thin night-gown, through which her charms were plainly visible. Believing herself alone with her maid, she made those little jokes that women will when undressing. "Am I not worth twenty thousand crowns to-night? Is that overpaid with a castle in le Brie?"

And saying this she gently raised two white supports, firm as rocks, which had well sustained many assaults, seeing they had been furiously attacked and had not softened. "My shoulders alone are worth a kingdom; no king could make their equal. But I am tired of this life. That which is hard work is no pleasure." The little maid smiled, and her lovely

mistress said to her : " I should like to see you in my place." Then the maid laughed outright, saying :

" Be quiet, madame, he is there."

" Who ? "

" Your husband."

" Which ? "

" The real one."

" Chut ! " said madame.

And her maid told her the whole story, wishing to keep her favor and the twelve thousand crowns as well.

" Oh, well, he shall have his money's worth. I'll give his desire time to cool. If he tastes me may I lose my beauty and become as ugly as a monkey's baby ! You get into bed in my place and thus gain the twelve thousand crowns. Go and tell him that he must take himself off early in the morning in order that I may not find out your trick upon me, and just before dawn I will get in by his side."

The poor husband was freezing and his teeth were chattering, and the chambermaid, coming to the cupboard on pretense of getting some linen, said to him : " Your hour of bliss approaches. Madame to-night has made grand preparations and you will be well served. But work without whistling, otherwise I shall be lost."

At last, when the good husband was on the point of perishing with cold, the lights were put out. The maid cried softly in the curtains to the King's sweetheart that his lordship was there, and jumped into the bed, while her mistress went out as if she had been the chambermaid. The advocate, released from his cold hiding-place, rolled rapturously into the warm sheets, thinking to himself : " Oh ! this is good ! " To tell the truth, the maid gave him his money's worth—and the Goodman thought of the difference between the profusion of royal houses and the niggardly ways of the citizens' wives. The servant, laughing, played her part marvelously well, regaling the knave with gentle cries, shiver

ings, convulsions, and tossings about, like a new-caught fish on the grass, giving little ah! ah's! in default of other words; and as often as the request was made by her, so often was it complied with by the advocate, who dropped off to sleep at last, like an empty pocket. But before finishing, the lover, who wished to preserve a souvenir of this sweet night of love, by a dexterous turn plucked out one of his wife's hairs, where from I know not, seeing I was not there, and kept in his hand this precious gage of the warm virtue of that lovely creature. Toward the morning, when the cock crew, the wife slipped in beside her husband, and pretended to sleep. Then the maid tapped gently on the happy man's forehead, whispering in his ear: "It is time; get into your clothes and off you go—it's daylight." The goodman grieved to lose his treasure and wished to see the source of his vanished happiness.

"Oh! oh!" said he, proceeding to compare certain things, "I have got light hair, and hers is dark."

"What have you done?" said the servant; "madame will see she has been duped."

"But, look."

"Ah!" said she, with an air of disdain, "do you not know, you who know everything, that that which is plucked dies and discolours?" and thereupon, roaring with laughter at the good joke, she pushed him out of doors. This became known. The poor advocate, named Féron, died of shame, seeing that he was the only one who had not had his own wife; while she, who from this was called *La belle Féronière*, married, after leaving the King, a young lord, Count of Buzançois. And in her old days she would relate the story, laughingly adding that she had never scented the knave's flavor.

This teaches us not to attach ourselves more than we can help to wives who refuse to support our yoke.

THE DEVIL'S HEIR.

THERE once was a good old canon of Notre Dame de Paris, who lived in a fine house of his own, near St. Pierre aux Bœufs, in the Parvis. This canon had come a simple priest to Paris, naked as a dagger without its sheath. But since he was found to be a handsome man, well furnished with everything, and so well constituted, that if necessary he was able to do the work of many without doing himself much harm, he gave himself up earnestly to the confessing of ladies, giving to the melancholy a gentle absolution, to the sick a drachm of his balm, to all some little dainty. He was so well known for his discretion, his benevolence, and other ecclesiastical qualities, that he had customers at Court. Then in order not to awaken the jealousy of the officials, that of the husbands and others, in short, to endow with sanctity these good and profitable practices, the Lady Desquerdes gave him a bone of St. Victor, by virtue of which all the miracles were performed. And to the curious it was said: "He has a bone which will cure everything;" and to this no one found anything to reply, because it was not seemly to suspect relics. Beneath the shade of his cassock, the good priest had the best of reputations, that of a man valiant under arms. So lived he like a king. He made money with holy water; sprinkled and transmitted the holy water into good wine. More than that, his name lay snugly in all the *et ceteras* of the notaries, in wills or in caudicils, which certain people have falsely written CODICIL, seeing that the word is derived from *cauda*, as if to say the tail of the legacy. In fact, the good old Long Skirts would have been made an archbishop if he had only said in joke: "I should like to put on a mitre for a head-kerchief in order to have my head warmer." Of all the benefices

offered to him, he chose only a simple canon's stall, to keep the good profits of the confessional. But one day the courageous canon found himself weak in the back, seeing that he was all sixty-eight years old, and had held many confessionals. Then thinking over all his good works, he thought it about time to cease his apostolic labors, the more so, as he possessed about one hundred thousand crowns earned by the sweat of his body. From that day he only confessed ladies of high lineage, and did it very well. So that it was said at Court that in spite of the efforts of the best young clerks there was still no one but the canon of St. Pierre aux Bœufs to properly bleach the soul of a lady of condition. Then at length the canon became by force of nature a fine nonagenarian, snowy about the head, with trembling hands, but square as a tower, having spat so much without coughing, that he coughed now without being able to spit ; no longer rising from his chair, he who had so often risen for humanity ; but drinking dry, eating heartily, saying nothing, but having all the appearance of a living canon of Notre Dame. Seeing the immobility of the aforesaid canon ; seeing the stories of his evil life which for some time had circulated among the common people, always ignorant ; seeing his dumb seclusion, his flourishing health, his young old age and other things too numerous to mention—there were certain people who, to do the marvelous and injure our holy religion, went about saying that the true canon was long since dead, and that for more than fifty years the devil had taken possession of the old priest's body. In fact, it seemed to his former customers that the devil only could by his great heat have furnished those hermetic distillations, that they remembered to have obtained on demand from this good confessor, who always had *le diable au corps* (the devil in his body). But as this devil had been undoubtedly cooked and ruined by them, and that for a queen of twenty years he would not have moved, well-disposed people and those not wanting in sense, or the citizens who argued

about everything, people who found lice in bald heads, demanded why the devil rested under the form of a canon, went to the church of Notre Dame at the hours when the canons usually go, and ventured so far as to sniff the perfume of the incense, taste the holy water, and a thousand other things. To these heretical propositions some said that doubtless the devil wished to convert himself, and others that he remained in the shape of the canon to mock at the three nephews and heirs of this said brave confessor and make them wait until the day of their own death for the ample succession of this uncle, to whom they paid great attention, every day going to look if the good man had his eyes open; and in fact found him always with his eye clear, bright, and piercing as the eye of a basilisk, which pleased them greatly, since they loved their uncle very much—in words. On this subject an old woman related that for certain the canon was the devil, because his two nephews, the procureur and the captain, conducting their uncle at night, without lamp or lantern, returning from a supper at the penitentiary's, had caused him by accident to tumble over a heap of stones gathered together to raise the statue of St. Christopher. At first the old man had struck fire in falling, but was, amid the cries of his dear nephews and by the light of the torches they came to seek at her house, found standing up as straight as a skittle and as gay as a weaving whirl, exclaiming that the good wine of the penitentiary had given him the courage to sustain this shock and that his bones were exceedingly hard and had sustained rude assaults. The good nephews, believing him dead, were much astonished, and perceived that the day that was to dispatch their uncle was a long way off, seeing that at the business stones were of no use. So that they did not falsely call him their good uncle, seeing that he was of good quality. Certain scandal-mongers said that the canon found so many stones in his path that he stayed at home not to be ill with the stone, and the fear of worse was the cause of his seclusion.

Of all these sayings and rumors, it remains that the old canon, devil or not, kept his house, refused to die, and had three heirs with whom he lived as with his sciaticas, lumbagos, and other appendage of human life. Of the said three heirs, one was the wickedest soldier ever born of a woman, and he must have considerably hurt her in breaking his egg, since he was born with teeth and bristles. So that he ate twofold, for the present and the future, keeping wenches whose cost he paid; inheriting from his uncle the continuance, strength, and good use of that which is often of service. In great battles, he endeavored always to give blows without receiving them, which is, and always will be, the only problem to solve in war, but he never spared himself there, and, in fact, as he had no other virtue except his bravery, he was captain of a company of lancers, and much esteemed by the Duke of Burgoyne, who never troubled what his soldiers did elsewhere. This nephew of the devil was named Captain Cohegrue; and his creditors, the blockheads, citizens, and others, whose pockets he slit, called him the "Mau-cinge," since he was as mischievous as strong; but he had, moreover, his back spoilt by the natural infirmity of a hump, but it would have been unwise to attempt to mount thereon to get a good view, for he would incontestably have run you through.

The second had studied the laws, and through the favor of his uncle had become a procureur, and practiced at the palace, where he did the business of the ladies, whom formerly the canon had the best confessed. This one was called "Pillegrue," to banter him upon his real name, which was Cohegrue, like that of his brother the captain. Pillegrue had a lean body, seemed to throw off very cold water, was pale of face, and possessed a physiognomy like a polecat.

This notwithstanding, he was worth many a penny more than the captain, and had for his uncle a little affection, but since about two years his heart had cracked a little, and drop by drop his gratitude had run out, in such away that, from

time to time when the air was damp, he liked to put his feet into his uncle's hose, and press in advance the juice of this good inheritance. He and his brother, the soldier, found their share very small, since loyally, in law, in fact, in justice, in nature, and in reality, it was necessary to give the third part of everything to a poor cousin, son of another sister of the canon, the which heir, but little loved by the goodman, remained in the country, where he was a shepherd, near Nanterre.

This guardian of beasts, an ordinary peasant, came to town by the advice of his two cousins, who placed him in their uncle's house, in the hope that, as much by his silly tricks as his clumsiness, his want of brain, and his ignorance, he would be displeasing to the canon, who would kick him out of his will. Now this poor Chiquon, as the shepherd was named, had lived about a month alone with his old uncle, and finding more profit or more amusement in minding an abbot than looking after sheep, made himself the canon's dog, his servant, the staff of his old age, saying: "God keep you," when he passed wind: "God save you," when he sneezed, and "God guard you," when he belched; going to see if it rained, where the cat was, remaining silent, listening, speaking, receiving the coughs of the old man in his face, admiring him as the finest canon there ever was in the world, all heartily and in good faith, knowing that he was licking him after the manner of animals who clean their young ones; and the uncle, who stood in no need of learning which side the bread was buttered, repulsed poor Chiquon, making him turn about like a die, always calling Chiquon, and always saying to his other nephews that this Chiquon was helping to kill him, such a numskull was he. Thereupon, hearing this, Chiquon determined to do well by his uncle, and puzzled his understanding to appear better; but as he had a behind shaped like a pair of pumpkins, was broad shouldered, large limbed, and far from sharp, he more resembled old Silenus than a

gentle Zephyr. In fact, the poor shepherd, a simple man, could not re-form himself, so he remained big and fat, awaiting his inheritance to make himself thin.

One evening the canon began discoursing concerning the devil and the grave agonies, penances, tortures, *etc*, which God will get warm for the accursed, and the good Chiquon, hearing it, began to open his eyes as wide as the door of an oven, at this statement, without believing a word of it.

"What," said the canon, "are you not a Christian?"

"In that, yes," answered Chiquon.

"Well, there is a paradise for the good; is it not necessary to have a hell for the wicked?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Canon; but the devil's of no use. If you had here a wicked man who turned everything upside down, would you not kick him out of doors?"

"Yes, Chiquon."

"Oh, well, uncle mine, God would be very stupid to leave in this world, which he has so curiously constructed, an abominable devil whose special business it is to spoil everything for him. Pish! I recognize no devil if there be a good God; you may depend upon that. I should very much like to see the devil. Ha! ha! I am not afraid of his claws!"

"And if I were of your opinion I should have no care of my very youthful years in which I held confessions at least ten times a day."

"Confess again, Monsieur le Canon. I assure you that will be a precious merit on high."

"There, there! do you mean it?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Canon."

"Thou dost not tremble, Chiquon, to deny the devil?"

"I trouble no more about it than a sheaf of corn."

"The doctrine will bring misfortune upon you."

"By no means. God will defend me from the devil because I believe him more learned and less stupid than the *savans* make him out."

Thereupon the other two nephews entered, and perceiving from the voice of the canon that he did not dislike Chiquon very much, and that the jeremiads which he made concerning him were simply tricks to disguise the affection which he bore him, looked at each other in great astonishment.

Then, seeing their uncle laughing, they said to him :

“If you make a will, to whom will you leave the house ?”

“To Chiquon.”

“And the quit-rent of the Rue St. Denys ?”

“To Chiquon.”

“And the fief of Ville Parisis ?”

“To Chiquon ?”

“But,” said the captain, with his big voice, “everything then will be Chiquon’s.”

“No,” replied the canon, smiling, “because I shall have made my will in proper form, the inheritance will be to the sharpest of you three ; I am so near to the future that I can therein see clearly your destinies.”

And the wily canon cast upon Chiquon a glance full of malice, like a decoy-bird would have thrown upon a little one to draw him into her net. The fire of this flaming eye enlightened the shepherd, who from that moment had his understanding and his ears all unfogged and his brain open, like that of a maiden the day after her marriage. The procureur and the captain, taking these sayings for gospel prophecies, made their bow, and went out from the house, quite perplexed at the absurd designs of the canon.

“What do you think of Chiquon ?” said Pillegrue to Maucinge.

“I think, I think,” said the soldier, growling, “that I think of hiding myself in the Rue d’Hiérusalem, to put his head below his feet ; he can pick it up again if he likes.”

“Oh ! oh !” said the procureur, “you have a way of wounding that is easily recognized, and the people would say : ‘It’s Cohegrue.’ As for me, I thought to invite him to dinner,

after which, we would play at putting ourselves in a sack, in order to see, as they do at Court, who could walk best thus attired. Then, having sewn him up, we could throw him into the Seine, at the same time begging him to swim."

"This must be well matured," replied the soldier.

"Oh! it's quite ripe," said the advocate. "The cousin gone to the devil, the heritage would then be between us two."

"I'm quite agreeable," said the fighter, "but we must stick as close together as the two legs of the same body, for if you are fine as silk, I am strong as steel, and daggers are always as good as traps—you hear that, my good brother."

"Yes," said the advocate, "the cause is heard—now shall it be the thread or the iron?"

"Eh? by the belly of God! is it then a king that we are going to settle? For a simple numskull of a shepherd are so many words necessary? Come! twenty thousand francs out of the heritage to the one of us who shall first cut him off. I'll say to him in good faith, 'pick up your head.'"

"And I, 'swim, my friend,'" cried the advocate, laughing like the gap in a doublet.

And then they went to supper, the captain to his wench, and the advocate to the house of a jeweler's wife, of whom he was the lover.

Who was astonished? Chiquon! The poor shepherd heard the planning of his death, although his two cousins had walked in the parvis, and talked to each other as every one speaks at church when praying to God. So that Chiquon was much troubled to know if the words had come up or if his ears had gone down.

"Did you hear, Mister the Canon?"

"Yes," said he, unmoved, "I hear the wood crackling in the fire."

"Ho ! ho !" replied Chiquon, "if I don't believe in the devil, I believe in St. Michael, my guardian angel ; I go there where he calls me."

"Go, my child," said the canon, "and take care not to wet yourself, nor to get your head knocked off, for I think I hear more rain, and the beggars in the street are not always the most dangerous beggars."

At these words Chiquon was much astonished, and stared at the canon ; found his manner gay, his eyes sharp, and his feet crooked ; but as he had to arrange matters concerning the death which menaced him, he thought to himself that he would always have leisure to admire the canon, or to cut his nails ; and he trotted off quickly through the town, as a little woman trots toward her pleasure.

His two cousins, having no presumption of the divinary science, of which shepherds have had many passing attacks, had often talked before him of their secret goings on, counting him as nothing.

Now one evening, to amuse the canon, Pillegrue had recounted to him how had fallen in love with him the wife of a jeweler on whose head he had adjusted certain carved, burnished, sculptured, historical horns, fit for the brow of a prince. The good lady was, to hear him, a right merry wench, quick at opportunities, giving an embrace while her husband was mounting the stairs, devouring the commodity as if she were swallowing a strawberry, only thinking of love-making, always trifling and frisky, gay as an honest woman who lacks nothing, contenting her husband, who cherished her as much as he loved his own gullet ; subtle as a perfume, so much so that for five years she managed so well his household affairs, and her own love affairs, that she had the reputation of a prudent woman, the confidence of her husband, the keys of the house, the purse, and all.

"And when do you play upon this gentle flute ?" said the canon.

"Every evening, and sometimes I stay all the night," he went on, cheerily.

"But how?" said the canon, astonished.

"This is how: There is in a room close to, a chest into which I get. When the good husband returns from his friend the dry-goods man's, where he goes to supper every evening, because often he helps the draper's wife in her work, my mistress pleads a slight illness, lets him go to bed alone, and comes to doctor her malady in the room where the chest is. On the morrow, when my jeweler is at his forge, I depart, and as the house has one exit on to the bridge and another into the street, I always come to the door where the husband is not, on the pretext of speaking to him of his suits, which commence joyfully and heartily, and I never let them come to an end. It is an income from cuckoldom, seeing that in the minor expenses and loyal costs of the proceedings, he spends as much as on the horses in his stable. He loves me well, as all good cuckolds should love the man who aids them to plant, cultivate, water, and dig the natural garden of Venus, and he does nothing without me."

Now these practices came back again to the memory of the shepherd, who was illuminated by the light issuing from his danger, and counseled by the intelligence of those measures of self-preservation, of which every animal possesses a sufficient dose to go to the end of his string-ball of life. So Chiquon gained with hasty feet the Rue de la Calandre, where the jeweler should then be supping with his companion, and, after having knocked at the door, replied to the question put to him through the little grill that he was a messenger on State secrets, and was admitted to the dry-goods merchant's house. Now coming straight to the fact, he made the happy jeweler get up from the table, led him into a corner, and said to him: "If one of your neighbors had planted a horn on your forehead, and he were delivered to you, bound hand and foot, would you throw him into the river?"

"Rather," said the jeweler; "but if you are mocking me I'll give you a good drubbing."

"There, there!" replied Chiquon, "I am one of your friends, and come to warn you that as many times as you have conversed with the draper's wife here, as often has your good wife been served the same way by the advocate Pillegrue, and if you will come back to your forge, you'll find a good fire there. On your arrival, he who looks after you-know-what, to keep it in good order, gets into a big clothes-chest. Now make a pretense that I have bought the said chest of you, and I will be upon the bridge with a cart, awaiting your orders."

The said jeweler took his cloak and his hat, and parted company with his crony without saying a word, and ran to his hole like a poisoned rat. He arrives and knocks, the door is opened, he runs hastily up the stairs, finds two covers laid, sees his wife coming out of the chamber of love, and then says to her: "My dear, here are two covers laid."

"Well, my darling, are we not two?"

"No," said he, "we are three."

"Is your friend coming?" said she, looking toward the stairs with perfect innocence.

"No, I speak of the friend who is in the chest," replied the knowing jeweler.

"What chest?" said she. "Are you in your sound senses? where do you see a chest? is it usual to put friends in chests? am I a woman to keep chests full of friends? How long have friends been kept in chests? are you come home mad to mix up your friends with your chests? I know no other friend than Master Cornille the draper, and no other chest than the one with our clothes in."

"Oh!" said the jeweler, "my goodwoman, there is a bad young man, who has come to warn me that you allow yourself to be embraced by our advocate, and that he is in the chest."

"I?" said she; "I would not put up with his knavery, he does everything the wrong way."

"There, there, my dear," replied the jeweler, "I know you to be a good woman, and won't have a squabble with you about this paltry chest. The giver of the warning is a box-maker, to whom I am about to sell this cursed chest that I wish never again to see in my house, and for this one he will sell me two pretty little ones, in which there will not be space enough even for a child; thus the scandal and the babble of those, envious of thy virtue, will be extinguished for want of nourishment."

"You give me great pleasure," said she; "I don't attach any value to my chest, and by chance there is nothing in it. Our linen is at the wash. It will be easy to have the mischievous chest taken away to-morrow morning. Will you sup?"

"Not at all," said he; "I shall sup with a better appetite without this chest."

"I see," said she, "that you won't easily get the chest out of your head."

"Halloo there!" said the jeweler to his smiths and apprentices; "come down!"

In the twinkling of an eye his people were before him. Then he, their master, having briefly ordered the handling of the said chest, this piece of furniture dedicated to love was suddenly tumbled across the room, but in passing, the advocate, finding his feet in the air, to the which he was not accustomed, tumbled over a little.

"Go on," said the wife, "go on, it's the lid shaking."

"No, my dear, it's the bolt."

And without any other opposition the chest slid gently down the stairs.

"Ho there, carrier!" said the jeweler, and Chiquon came whistling his mules, and the good apprentices lifted the litigious chest into the cart.

"Hi! hi!" said the advocate.

"Master, the chest is speaking," said an apprentice.

"In what language?" said the jeweler, giving him a good kick between two features that luckily were not made of glass. The apprentice stumbled over on to a stair in a way that induced him to discontinue his studies in the language of chests. The shepherd, accompanied by the good jeweler, carried all the baggage to the water-side without listening to the high eloquence of the speaking wood, and, having tied several stones to it, the jeweler threw it into the Seine.

"*Swim, my friend,*" cried the shepherd, in a voice sufficiently jeering at the moment when the chest turned over, giving a pretty little plunge like a duck.

Then Chiquon continued to proceed along the quay, as far as the Rue-du-port, St. Laudry, near the cloisters of Notre Dame. There he noticed a house, recognized the door, and knocked loudly.

"Open," said he, "open by order of the King."

Hearing this, an old man, who was no other than the famous Lombard, Versoris, ran to the door.

"What is it?" said he.

"I am sent by the provost to warn you to keep good watch to-night," replied Chiquon; "as for his own part he will keep his archers ready. The hunchback who has robbed you has come back again. Keep under arms, for he is quite capable of easing you of the rest."

Having said this, the good shepherd took to his heels and ran to the Rue des Marmouzets, to the house where Captain Cohegrue was feasting with la Pasquerette, the prettiest of town-girls, and the most charming in perversity that ever was; according to all the gay ladies, her glance was sharp and piercing as the stab of a dagger. Her appearance was so tickling to the sight that it would have put all paradise to route. Beside which she was as bold as a woman who has no other virtue than her insolence. Poor Chiquon was greatly

embarrassed while going to the quarter of the Marmouzets. He was greatly afraid that he would be unable to find the house of la Pasquerette, or find the two pigeons gone to roost, but a good angel arranged things speedily to his satisfaction. This is how: On entering the Rue des Marmouzets, he saw several lights at the windows, and night-capped heads thrust out, and good wenches, gay girls, housewives, husbands, and young ladies, all of them just out of bed, looking at each other as if a robber were being led to execution by torchlight.

"What's the matter?" said the shepherd to a citizen who in great haste had rushed to the door with a chamber utensil in his hand.

"Oh! it's nothing," replied the good man. "We thought it was the Armagnacs descending upon the town, but it's only Maucinge beating la Pasquerette."

"Where?" asked the shepherd.

"Below there, at that fine house where the pillars have the mouths of flying frogs delicately engraved upon them. Do you hear the varlets and the serving-maids?"

And in fact there was nothing but cries of "Murder! Help! Come, some one!" and in the house blows were raining down and the Maucinge said with his gruff voice: "Death to the wench! Ah, you sing out now, do you? Ah, you want money now, do you? Take that——"

And la Pasquerette was groaning, "Oh! oh! I die! Help! help! oh! oh!" Then came the blow of a sword, then the heavy fall of the light body of the fair girl sounded, and was followed by a great silence, after which the lights were put out, servants, waiting-women, roysterers, and others went in again, and the shepherd, who had come opportunely, mounted the stairs in company with them, but on beholding in the room above broken glasses, slit carpets, and the cloth on the floor with the dishes, every one remained at a distance.

The shepherd, bold as a man with but one end in view,

opened the door of the handsome chamber where slept la Pasquerette, and found her quite exhausted, her hair disheveled, and her neck twisted, lying upon a bloody carpet, and Maucinge frightened, with his tone considerably lower, and not knowing upon what note to sing the remainder of his anthem.

"Come, my little Pasquerette, don't pretend to be dead. Come, let me put you tidy. Ah! little minx, dead or alive, you look so pretty in your blood I'm going to kiss you." Having said which the cunning soldier took her and threw her upon the bed, but she fell there all of a heap, and limp as the body of a man that had been hanged. Seeing which her companion found it was time for his hump to retire from the game; however, the artful fellow before slinking away said: "Poor Pasquerette, how could I murder so good a girl, and one I loved so much? But, yes, I have killed her, the thing is clear, for in her life never did her sweet breast hang down like that. Good God, one would say it was a crown at the bottom of a wallet." Thereupon la Pasquerette opened her eyes and bent her head slightly to look at her flesh, which was white and firm, and she brought herself to life again by a box on the ears, administered to the captain.

"That will teach you to beware of the dead," said she, smiling.

"And why did he kill you, my cousin?" asked the shepherd.

"Why? to-morrow the bailiffs seize everything that's here, and he, who has no more money than virtue, reproached me because I wished to be agreeable to a handsome gentleman, who would save me from the hands of justice."

"Pasquerette, I'll break every bone in your skin."

"There! there!" said Chiquon, whom the Maucinge had just recognized, "is that all? Oh, well, my good friend, I bring you a large sum."

"Where from?" asked the captain, astonished.

“Come here, and let me whisper in your ear—if thirty thousand crowns were walking about at night under the shadow of a pear-tree, would you not stoop down to pluck them, to prevent them spoiling?”

“Chiquon, I’ll kill you like a dog if you are making game of me, or I’ll kiss you there where you like it, if you will put me opposite thirty thousand crowns, even when it shall be necessary to kill three citizens at the corner of the quay.”

“You will not even kill one. This is how the matter stands: I have for a sweetheart in all loyalty, the servant of the Lombard who is in the city near the house of our good uncle. Now I have just learned on sound information that this dear man has departed this morning into the country, after having hidden under a pear-tree in his garden a good bushel of gold, believing himself to be seen only by the angels. But the girl, who had by chance a bad toothache, and was taking the air at her garret window, spied the old crookshanks, without wishing to do so, and chattered of it to me in fondness. If you will swear to give me a good share I will lend you my shoulders in order that you may climb on to the top of the wall, and from there throw yourself into the pear-tree, which is against the wall. There, now do you say that I am a block-head, an animal?”

“No, you are a right loyal cousin, an honest man, and if you have ever to put an enemy out of the way, I am there, ready to kill even one of my own friends for you. I am no longer your cousin, but your brother. Ho there, sweetheart,” cried Maucinge to la Pasquerette, “put the tables straight, wipe up your blood, it belongs to me, and I’ll pay you for it, by giving you a hundred times as much of mine as I have taken of thine. Make the best of it, shake the black dog off your back, adjust your petticoats, laugh, I wish it, look to the stew, and let us recommence our evening prayer where we left it off. To-morrow I will make thee braver than a queen. This is my cousin whom I wish to entertain, even when to do

so it were necessary to turn the house out of windows. We shall get back everything to-morrow in the cellars. Come, fall to."

Thus, and in less time than it takes a priest to say his *Dominus vobiscum*, the whole rookery passed from tears to laughter, as it had previously passed from laughter to tears. It is only in these houses of ill-fame that love is made with the blow of a dagger, and where tempests of joy rage between four walls. But these are things ladies of the high-necked dress do not understand.

The said Captain Cohegrue was gay as a hundred school-boys at the breaking up of class, and made his good cousin drink deeply, who swilled everything country fashion, and pretended to be drunk, spluttering out a hundred stupidities, as, that "to-morrow he would buy Paris, would lend a hundred thousand crowns to the King, that he would be able to roll in gold," in fact, talked so much nonsense that the captain, fearing some compromising avowal and thinking his brain quite muddled enough, led him outside with the good intention, instead of sharing with him, of ripping Chiquon open to see if he had not a sponge in his stomach, because he had just soaked in a big quart of the good wine of Suresne. They went along, disputing about a thousand theological subjects, which got very much mixed up, and finished by rolling quietly up against the garden where were the crowns of the Lombard. Then Cohegrue, making a ladder of Chiquon's broad shoulders, jumped on to the pear-tree like a man expert in attacks upon towns, but Versoris, who was watching him, made a blow at his neck, and repeated it so vigorously that with three blows fell the upper portion of the said Cohegrue, but not until he had heard the clear voice of the shepherd, who cried to him: "*Pick up your head, my friend.*" Thereupon the generous Chiquon, in whom virtue received its recompense, thought it would be wise to return to the house of the good canon, whose heritage was by the grace of God

considerably simplified. Thus he gained the Rue St. Pierre aux Bœufs with all speed, and soon slept like a new-born baby, no longer knowing the meaning of the word "cousin-german." Now on the morrow he rose, according to the habit of shepherds, with the sun, and came into his uncle's room to inquire if he spat white, if he coughed, if he had slept well; but the old servant told him that the canon, hearing the bells of St. Maurice, the first patron of Notre Dame, ring for matins, he had gone out of reverence to the cathedral, where all the chapter were to breakfast with the bishop of Paris; upon which Chiquon replied: "Is his reverence the canon out of his senses thus to disport himself, to catch a cold, to get rheumatism? does he wish to die? I'll light a big fire to warm him when he returns;" and the good shepherd ran into the room where the canon generally sat, and to his astonishment beheld him seated in his chair.

"Ah! ah! What did she mean, that fool of a Buyrette? I knew you were too well advised to be shivering at this hour in your stall."

The canon said not a word. The shepherd, who was, like all thinkers, a man of hidden sense, was quite aware that sometimes old men have strange crotchets, converse with the essence of occult things, and mumble to themselves discourses concerning matters not under consideration: so that, from reverence and great respect for the secret meditations of the canon, he went and sat down at a distance, and waited the termination of these dreams; noticing silently the length of the good man's nails, which looked like cobblers' awls, and looking attentively at the feet of his uncle, he was astonished to see the flesh of his legs so crimson that it reddened his breeches and seemed all on fire through his hose.

"He is dead," thought Chiquon. At this moment the door of the room opened, and he there saw the canon, who, his nose frozen, came back from church.

"Ho! ho!" said Chiquon, "my dear uncle, are you out

of your senses? Kindly take notice that you ought not to be at the door, because you are already seated in your chair in the chimney-corner, and that it is impossible for there to be two canons like you in the world."

"Ah! Chiquon, there was a time when I could have wished to be in two places at once, but such is not the fate of man, he would be too happy. Are you getting dim-sighted? I am alone here."

Then Chiquon turned his head toward the chair, and found it empty; and much astonished, as you will easily believe, he approached it, and found on the seat a little pat of cinders, from which ascended a strong odor of sulphur.

"Ah!" said he, merrily, "I perceive that the devil has behaved well toward me—I will pray God for him."

And thereupon he related naïvely to the canon how the devil had amused himself by playing at Providence, and had loyally aided him to get rid of his wicked cousins, the which the canon admired much, and thought very good, seeing that he had plenty of good sense left, and often had observed things which were to the devil's advantage. So the good old priest remarked that as much good was always met with in evil as evil in good, and that therefore one should not trouble too much after the other world, the which was a grave heresy, which many councils have put right.

And this was how the Chiquons became rich, and were able in these times, by the fortunes of their ancestors, to help to build the bridge of St. Michael, where the devil cuts a very good figure under the angel, in memory of this adventure now consigned to these veracious histories.

THE MERRIE JESTS OF KING LOUIS THE ELEVENTH.

KING LOUIS THE ELEVENTH was a merry fellow, loving a good joke, and—the interests of his position as King and those of the church on one side—he lived jovially, giving chase to soiled doves, as often as to hares, and other royal game. Therefore the sorry scribblers, who have made him out a hypocrite, show plainly that they knew him not, since he was a good friend, good at repartee, and a jollier fellow than any of them.

It was he who said, when he was in a merry mood, that four things are excellent and opportune in life—to keep warm, to drink cool, to stand up hard, and to swallow soft. Certain persons have accused him of taking up with dirty trollops; this is a notorious falsehood, since all his mistresses, of whom one was legitimized, came of good houses and had notable establishments. He did not go in for waste and extravagance, always put his hand upon the solid, and because certain devourers of the people found no crumbs at his table, they have all maligned him. But the real collectors of facts know that the said King was a capital fellow in private life, and even very agreeable; and before cutting off the heads of his friends, or punishing them—for he did not spare them—it was necessary that they should have greatly offended him, and his vengeance was always justice; I have only seen in our friend Verville that this worthy sovereign ever made a mistake; but once does not make a habit, and even for this his boon companion, Tristan, was more to blame than he, the King. This is the circumstance related by the said Verville, and I suspect he was cracking a joke. I reproduce it because certain people are not familiar with the exquisite work of my perfect compatriot. I abridge it and only give the substance,

the details being more ample, of which fact the *savans* are not ignorant.

Louis XI. had given the abbey of Turpenay (mentioned in "Imperia") to a gentleman who, enjoying the revenue, had called himself Monsieur de Turpenay. It happened that the King being at Plessis-les-Tours, the real abbot, who was a monk, came and presented himself before the King, and presented also a petition, remonstrating with him that, canonically and monastically, he was entitled to the abbey, and that the usurping gentleman wronged him of his rights, and therefore he called upon his majesty to have justice done to him. Nodding his peruke, the King promised to render him contented. This monk, importunate as are all hooded animals, came often at the end of the King's meals, who, bored with the holy water of the convent, called friend Tristan and said to him: "Old fellow, there is here a Turpenay who angers me; rid the world of him for me." Tristan, taking a frock for a monk, or a monk for a frock, came to this gentleman, whom all the Court called Monsieur de Turpenay, and, having accosted him, managed to lead him on one side, then taking him by the button-hole gave him to understand that the King desired he should die. He tried to resist, supplicating and supplicating to escape, but in no way could he obtain a hearing. He was delicately strangled between the head and the shoulders, so that he expired; and, three hours afterward, Tristan told the King that he was discharged. It happened five days afterward, which is the space in which souls come back again, that the monk came into the room where the King was, and when he saw him he was much astonished. Tristan was present; the King called him, and whispered into his ear:

"You have not done that which I told you to."

"Saving your grace, I have done it. Turpenay is dead."

"Eh? I meant this monk."

"I understood the gentleman!"

“What, it is done, then?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“Very well, then”—turning toward the monk—“come here, monk.” The monk approached. The King said to him, “Kneel down.” The poor monk began to shiver in his shoes. But the King said to him, “Thank God that he has not willed that you should be killed as I had ordered. He who took your estates has been instead. God has done you justice. Go and pray God for me, and don’t stir out of your convent.”

This proves the good-heartedness of Louis XI. He might very well have hanged the monk, the cause of the error. As for the said gentleman, he died in the King’s service.

In the early days of his sojourn at Plessis-les-Tours King Louis, not wishing to hold his drinking-bouts and give vent to his rakish propensities in his castle, out of respect to her majesty (a kingly delicacy which his successors have not possessed) became enamored of a lady named Nicole Beaupertuys, who was, to tell the truth, wife of a citizen of the town. The husband he sent into Ponent, and put the said Nicole in a house near Chardonneret, in that part where is the Rue Quincangrogne, because it was a lonely place, far from other habitations. The husband and the wife were thus both in his service, and he had by la Beaupertuys a daughter, who died a nun. This Nicole had a tongue as sharp as a popinjay’s, was of stately proportions, furnished with large beautiful cushions of nature, firm to the touch, white as the wings of an angel, and known for the rest to be fertile in peripatetic ways, which brought it to pass that never with her was the same thing encountered twice in love, so deeply had she studied the sweet solutions of the science, the manners of accommodating the olives of Poissy, the expansions of the nerves, and hidden doctrines of the breviary, the which much delighted the King. She was as gay as a lark, always laughing and singing, and never made any one miserable, which is

the characteristic of women of this open and free nature, who have always an occupation—an equivocal one if you like. The King often went with the hail-fellows his friends to the lady's house, and in order not to be seen always went at night-time and without his suite. But, being always distrustful, and fearing some snare, he gave to Nicole all the most savage dogs he had in his kennels, beggars that would eat a man without saying "By your leave," the which royal dogs knew only Nicole and the King. When the Sire came Nicole let them loose in the garden, and the door of the house being sufficiently barred and closely shut, the King put the keys in his pocket, and in perfect security gave himself up, with his satellites, to every kind of pleasure, fearing no betrayal, jumping about at will, playing tricks, and getting up good games. Upon these occasions friend Tristan watched the neighborhood, and any one who had taken a walk on the mall of Chardonneret would have been rather quickly placed in a position in which it would have been easy to give the passers-by a benediction with his feet, unless he had the King's pass, since often would Louis send out in search of lasses for his friends, or people to entertain him with the amusements suggested by Nicole or the guests. People of Tours were there for these little amusements, to whom he gently recommended silence, so that no one knew of these pastimes until after his death. The farce of "Baiser mon cul" was, it is said, invented by the said Sire. I will relate it, although it is not the subject of this tale, because it shows the natural comicality and humor of this merry monarch. There were at Tours three well-known misers: the first was Maître Cornélius, who is sufficiently well known; the second was called Peccard, and sold the gilt-work, colored papers, and jewels used in churches; the third was hight Marchandeau, and was a very wealthy vine-grower. These two men of Touraine were the founders of good families, notwithstanding their sordidness. One evening that the King was

with Beaupertuys, in a good humor, having drunk heartily, joked heartily, and offered early in the evening his prayer in madame's oratory, he said to le Daim, his crony, to the cardinal, la Balue, and to old Dunois, who were still soaking: "Let us have a good laugh! I think it will be a good joke to see misers before a bag of gold without their being able to touch it. Hi, there!"

Hearing which, appeared one of his varlets.

"Go," said he, "seek my treasurer, and let him bring hither six thousand gold crowns—and at once! And you will go and seize the bodies of my friend Cornélius, of the jeweler of the Rue de Cygnes, and of old Marchandeau, and bring them here, by order of the King."

Then he began to drink again, and to judiciously wrangle as to which was the better, a woman with a gamey odor or a woman who soaped herself well all over; a thin one or a stout one; and as the company comprised the flower of wisdom it was decided that the best was the one a man had all to himself like a plate of warm mussels, at that precise moment when God sent him a good idea to communicate to her. The cardinal asked which was the most precious thing to a lady—the first or the last kiss? To which la Beaupertuys replied "that it was the last, seeing that she knew then what she was losing, while at the first she did not know what she would gain." During these sayings, and others which have most unfortunately been lost, came the six thousand gold crowns, which were worth all three hundred thousand francs of to-day, so much do we go on decreasing in value every day. The King ordered the crowns to be arranged upon a table, and well lighted up, so that they shone like the eyes of the company, which lit up involuntarily, and made them laugh in spite of themselves. They did not wait long for the three misers, whom the varlet led in, pale and panting, except Cornélius,* who knew the King's strange freaks.

* See "Maitre Cornélius," in the *Comédie Humaine*

"Now, then, my friends," said Louis to them, "have a good look at the crowns on the table."

And the three townsmen nibbled at them with their eyes.

You may reckon that the diamond of la Beaupertuys sparkled less than their little minnow eyes.

"These are yours," added the King.

Thereupon they ceased to admire the crowns to look at each other, and the guests knew well that old knaves are more expert in grimaces than any others, because their physiognomies become tolerably curious, like those of cats lapping up milk, or girls titillated with marriage.

"There," said the King, "all that shall be his who shall say three times to the two others: '*Baiser mon eul*, or, kiss my—,' thrusting his hand into the gold; but if he be not as serious as a fly who has violated his lady-love, if he smile while repeating the jest, he will pay ten crowns to madame. Nevertheless he can essay three times."

"That will be soon earned," said Cornélius, who, being a Dutchman, had his lips as often compressed and serious as madame's mouth was often open and laughing. Then he bravely put his hands on the crowns to see if they were good, and clutched them gravely, but as he looked at the others to say civilly to them: "*Baiser mon cul*," the two misers, distrustful of his Dutch gravity, replied: "Certainly, sir," as if he had sneezed. The which caused all the company to laugh, and even Cornélius himself. When the vine-grower went to take the crowns he felt such a commotion in his cheeks that his old scummy face let little laughs exude from all its pores like smoke pouring out of a chimney, and he could say nothing. Then it was the turn of the jeweler, who was a little bit of a bantering fellow, and whose lips were as tightly squeezed as the neck of a hanged man. He seized a handful of the crowns, looked at the others, even the King, and said, with a jeering air: "*Baiser mon cul*."

"Is it dirty?" asked the vine-dresser.

"Look and see," replied the jeweler, gravely.

Thereupon the King began to tremble for his crowns, since the said Peccard began again, without laughing, and for the third time was about to utter the sacramental word, when la Beaupertuys made a sign of consent to his modest request, which caused him to lose his countenance, and his mouth broke up into dimples.

"How did you do," asked Dunois, "to keep a grave face before six thousand crowns?"

"Oh, my lord, I thought first of one of my cases which is to be tried to-morrow, and, secondly, of my wife, who is a sorry plague."

The desire to gain this good round sum made them try again, and the King amused himself for about an hour at the expressions of these faces, the preparations, jokes, grimaces, and other monkey's paternosters that they performed; but they were baling their boats with a sieve, and for men who preferred closing their fists to opening them it was a bitter sorrow to have to count out, each one, a hundred crowns to madame.

When they were gone, Nicole said boldly to the King: "Sire, will you let me try?"

"Holy Virgin!" replied Louis; "no! I can kiss yours for less money."

That was said like a thrifty man, which indeed he always was.

One evening the fat Cardinal la Balue carried on gallantly with words and actions, a little further than the canons of the church permitted him, with this Beaupertuys, who, luckily for herself, was a clever hussy, not to be asked with impunity how many holes there were in her mother's chemise.

"Look you here, Sir Cardinal!" said she, withering in her scorn, "the thing which the King likes is not to receive the holy oils."

Then came Olivier le Daim, to whom she would not listen

either, and to whose nonsense she replied that she would ask the King if he wished her to be shaved.

Now as the said shaver did not supplicate her to keep his proposals secret, she suspected that these little plots were ruses practiced by the King, whose suspicions had perhaps been aroused by her friends. Now, not being able to revenge herself upon Louis, she at least determined to pay out the said lords, to make fools of them, and amuse the King with the tricks she would play upon them. One evening that they had come to supper, she had a lady of the city with her, who wished to speak with the King. This lady was one of position, who wished to ask of the King pardon for her husband, the which, in consequence of this adventure, she obtained. Nicole Beaupertuys having led the King aside for a moment into an antechamber, told him to make their guests drink hard and eat to repletion; that he was to make merry, and joke with them; but when the cloth was removed, he was to pick quarrels with them about trifles, dispute their words, and be sharp with them; and that then she would divert him by turning them inside out before him. But above all things, he was to be friendly to the said lady, and it was to appear genuine, as if she enjoyed the perfume of his favor, because she had gallantly lent herself to this good joke.

“Well, gentlemen,” said the King, reëntering the room, “let us fall to; we have had a good day’s sport.”

And the surgeon, the cardinal, a fat bishop, the captain of the Scottish Guards, a parliamentary envoy, and a judge loved of the King, followed the two ladies into the room where one rubs the rust off one’s jawbones. And there they lined the mould of their doublets. What is that? It is to pave the stomach, to practice the chemistry of nature, to register the various dishes, to regale your tripes, to dig your grave with your teeth, play with the sword of Cain, to inter sauces, to support a cuckold. But more philosophically it is to make

ordure with one's teeth. Now do you understand? How many words does it require to burst open the lid of your understanding?

The King did not fail to instill into his guests this splendid and first-class supper. He stuffed them with green peas, returning to the hotch-potch, praising the plums, commending the fish, saying to one: "Why do you not eat?" to another: "Drink to madame;" to all of them: "Gentlemen, taste these lobsters; put this bottle to death! You do not know the flavor of this forcemeat. And these lampreys—ah! what do you say to them? And, by the Lord! the finest barbel ever drawn from the Loire! Just stick your teeth into this pasty. This game is my own hunting; he who takes it not offends me." And again: "Drink, the King's eyes are the other way. Just give me your opinion of these preserves; they are madame's own. Have some of these grapes; they are my own growing. Have some medlars." And while inducing them to swell out their abdominal protuberances, the good monarch laughed with them, and they joked, and disputed, and spat, and blew their noses, and kicked up just as though the King had not been with them. Then so much victuals had been taken on board, so many flagons drained and stews spoiled that the faces of the guests were the color of cardinal's gowns, and their doublets appeared ready to burst, since they were crammed with meat like Troyes sausages from the top to the bottom of their paunches. Going into the salon again, they broke into a profuse sweat, began to blow, and to curse their gluttony. The King sat quietly apart; each of them was the more willing to be silent because all their forces were required for the intestinal digestion of the huge platefuls confined in their stomachs, which began to wobble and rumble violently. One said to himself: "I was stupid to eat of that sauce." Another scolded himself for having indulged in a plate of eels cooked with capers. Another thought to himself: "Oh! oh! the forcemeat is serving me out."

The cardinal, who was the biggest bellied man of the lot, snorted through his nostrils like a frightened horse. It was he who was first compelled to give vent to a loud sounding belch, and then he soon wished himself in Germany, where this is a form of salutation, for the King, hearing this gastric language, looked at the cardinal with knitted brows.

"What does this mean?" said he; "am I a simple clerk?"

This was heard with terror, because usually the King made much of a good belch well off the stomach. The other guests determined to get rid in another way of the vapors which were dodging about in their pancreatic retorts; and at first they endeavored to hold them for a little while in the pleats of their mesenteries. It was then that some of them puffed and swelled like tax-gatherers. Beaupertuys took the good King aside and said to him:

"Know now that I have had made by the church jeweler, Peccard, two large dolls, exactly resembling this lady and myself. Now when hard pressed by the drugs which I have put in their goblets, they desire to mount the throne to which we are now about to pretend to go, they will always find the place taken; by this means you will enjoy their writhings."

Thus having said, la Beaupertuys disappeared with the lady to go and turn the wheel, after the custom of women, and of which I will tell you the origin in another place. And after an honest fall of water, la Beaupertuys came back alone, leaving it to be believed that she had left the lady at the little laboratory of natural alchemy. Thereupon the King, singling out the cardinal, made him get up, and talked with him seriously of his affairs, holding him by the tassel of his amice.* To all that the King said, la Balue replied: "Yes, Sire," to be delivered from this favor, and to slip out of the room, since the water was in his cellars, and he was about to lose the key of his back-door. All the guests were in a state

* An embroidered piece of linen, worn under the alb by priests.

of not knowing how to arrest the progress of the fæcal matter to which nature has given, even more than to water, the property of finding a certain level. Their substances modified themselves and glided working downward, like those insects who demand to be let out of their cocoons, raging, tormenting, and ungrateful to the higher powers; for nothing is so ignorant, so insolent as those cursed objects, and they are importunate like all things detained to whom one owes liberty. So they slipped at every turn like eels out of a net, and each one had need of great efforts and science not to disgrace himself before the King. Louis took great pleasure in interrogating his guests, and was much amused with the vicissitudes of their physiognomies, on which were reflected the dirty grimaces of their writhings. The counselor of justice said to Olivier: "I would give my office to be behind a hedge for half a dozen seconds."

"Oh, there is no enjoyment to equal a good stool; and now I am no longer astonished at the everlasting droppings of a fly," replied the surgeon.

The cardinal, believing that the lady had obtained her receipt from the bank of deposit, left the tassels of his girdle in the King's hand, making a start as if he had forgotten to say his prayers, and made his way toward the door.

"What is the matter with you, Monsieur le Cardinal?" said the King.

"By my halidame, what is the matter with me? It appears that all your affairs are very extensive, Sire!"

The cardinal slipped out, leaving the others astonished at his cunning. He proceeded gloriously toward the lower room, loosing a little the strings of his purse; but when he opened the blessed little door he found the lady at her functions upon the throne, like a pope about to be consecrated. Then restraining his impatience, he descended the stairs to go into the garden. However, on the last steps the barking of the dogs put him in great fear of being bitten in one of

his precious hemispheres; and not knowing where to deliver himself of his chemical produce he came back into the room, shivering like a man who had been in the open air! The others, seeing the cardinal return, imagined that he had emptied his natural reservoirs, unburdened his ecclesiastical bowels, and believed him happy. Then the surgeon rose quickly, as if to take note of the tapestries and count the rafters, but gained the door before any one else, and relaxing his sphincter in advance, he hummed a tune on his way to the retreat; arrived there he was compelled, like *la Balue*, to murmur words of excuse to this student of perpetual motion, shutting the door with as much promptitude as he had opened it; and he came back burdened with an accumulation which seriously impeded his private channels. And in the same way went the guests one after the other, without being able to unburden themselves of their sauces, and soon again found themselves all in the presence of *Louis the Eleventh*, as much distressed as before, looking at each other slyly, understanding each other better with their tails than they ever understood with their mouths, for there is never any equivocation in the transactions of the parts of nature, and everything therein is rational and of easy comprehension, seeing that it is a science which we learn at our birth.

"I believe," said the cardinal to the surgeon, "that lady will go on until to-morrow. What was *la Beaupertuys* about to ask such a case of *diarrhœa* here?"

"She's been an hour working at what I would get done in a minute. May the fever seize her!" cried *Olivier le Daim*.

All the courtiers seized with colic were walking up and down to make their importunate matters patient, when the said lady reappeared in the room. You can believe they found her beautiful and graceful, and would willingly have kissed her, there where they so longed to go; and never did they salute the day with more favor than this lady, the liberator of their

poor unfortunate bodies. La Balue rose; the others, from honor, esteem, and reverence of the church, gave way to the clergy, and, biding their time, they continued to make grimaces, at which the King laughed to himself with Nicole, who aided him to stop the respiration of these loose-boweled gentlemen. The good Scotch captain, who had more than all the others eaten of a dish in which the cook had put an aperient powder, became the victim of misplaced confidence. He went ashamed into a corner, hoping that, before the King, his mistake might escape detection. At this moment the cardinal returned horribly upset, because he had found la Beaupertuys on the episcopal seat. Now, in his torments, not knowing if she were in the room, he came back and gave vent to a diabolical "*Oh!*" on beholding her near his master.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the King, looking at the priest in a way to give him the fever.

"Sire," said la Balue, insolently, "the affairs of purgatory are in my ministry, and I am bound to inform you that there is a sorcery going on in this house."

"Ah! little priest, you wish to make game of me!" said the King.

At these words the company were in a terrible state.

"So, you treat me with disrespect?" said the King, which made them turn pale. "Ho, there! Tristan, my friend!" cried Louis XI. from the window, which he threw up suddenly, "come up here!"

The grand provost of the palace was not long before he appeared; and as these gentlemen were all nobodies, raised to their present position by the favor of the King, Louis, in a moment of anger, could crush them at will; so that with the exception of the cardinal, who relied upon his cassock, Tristan found them all rigid and aghast.

"Conduct these gentlemen to the pretorium, on the mall, my friend; they have disgraced themselves through over-eating."

“Am I not good at jokes?” said Nicole to him.

“The farce is good, but it is fetid,” replied he, laughing.

This royal answer showed the courtiers that this time the King did not intend to play with their heads if he had with their rumps, for which they thanked heaven. This monarch was partial to these dirty tricks. He was not at all a bad fellow, as the guests remarked while relieving themselves against the side of the mall with Tristan, who, like a good Frenchman, kept them company, and escorted them to their homes. This is why since that time the citizens of Tours have never failed to defile the mall of Chardonneret, because the gentlemen of the Court had been there.

I will not leave this great King without committing to writing the good joke which he played upon la Godegrand, who was an old maid, much disgusted that she had not, during the forty years she had lived, been able to find a lid to her saucepan, enraged, in her yellow skin, that she was still as virgin as a mule. This old maid had her apartments on the other side of the house which belonged to la Beaupertuys, at the corner of Rue de Hiérusalem, in such a position that, standing on the balcony joining the wall, it was easy to see what she was doing and hear what she was saying in the lower room where she lived; and often the King derived much amusement from the antics of the old girl, who did not know that she was so much within the range of his majesty's culverin. Now one market-day it happened that the King had caused to be hanged a young citizen of Tours, who had violated a noble lady of a certain age, believing that she was a young maiden. There would have been no harm in this, and it would have been a thing greatly to the credit of the said lady to have been taken for a virgin; but on finding out his mistake, he had abominably insulted her, and, suspecting her of trickery, had taken it into his head to rob her of a splendid silver goblet, in payment of the present he had just made her. This young man had long hair, and was so handsome that the whole

town wished to see him hanged, both from regret and out of curiosity. You may be sure that at this hanging there were more hats than caps. Indeed, the said young man was swung very well; and, after the fashion and custom of persons hanged, he died gallantly with his lance couched, which fact made a great noise in the town. Many ladies said on this subject that it was a murder not to have preserved so fine a fellow from the scaffold.

"Suppose we were to have taken down and put this handsome corpse in the bed of la Godegrand," said la Beaupertuys to the King.

"We should terrify her," replied Louis.

"Not at all, Sire. Be sure that she will welcome even a dead man, so madly does she long for a living one. Yesterday I saw her making love to a young man's cap placed on the top of a chair, and you would have laughed heartily at her words and gestures."

Now while this forty-year-old virgin was at vespers, the King sent to have the young townsman, who had just finished the last scene of his tragic farce, taken down, and, having dressed him in a white shirt, two officers got over the walls of la Godegrand's garden, and put the corpse into her bed, on the side nearest the street. Having done this they went away, and the King remained in the room with the balcony to it, playing with Beaupertuys, and awaiting the hour at which the old maid should go to bed. La Godegrand soon came back with a hop, skip, and jump, as the Tourangeaux say, from the church of St. Martin, from which she was not far, since the Rue d'Hiérusalem touches the walls of the cloister. She entered her house, laid down her prayer-book, chaplet, and rosary, and other ammunition which these old girls carry, then poked the fire, blew it, warmed herself at it, settled herself in her chair, and played with her cat for want of something better; then she went to the larder, supping and sighing, and sighing and supping, eating alone, with her eyes cast

THE MERRIE JESTS OF KING LOUIS XI.



down upon the carpet ; and, after having drunk, behaved in a manner forbidden in Court society.

“ Ah ! if the corpse said to her : ‘ God bless you ! ’ ”

At this joke of la Beaupertuys, both laughed heartily in their sleeves. And with great attention this very Christian King watched the undressing of the old maid, who admired herself while removing her things—pulling out a hair, or scratching a pimple which had maliciously come upon her nose ; picking her teeth, and doing a thousand little things which, alas ! all ladies, virgins or not, are obliged to do, much to their annoyance ; but without these little faults of nature they would be too proud, and one would not be able to enjoy their society. Having achieved her aquatic and musical discourse, the old maid got in between the sheets, and yelled forth a fine, great, ample, and curious cry, when she saw, when she smelt the fresh vigor of this hanged man and the sweet perfume of his manly youth ; then sprang away from him out of coquetry. But as she did not know he was really dead, she came back again, believing he was mocking her, and counterfeiting death.

“ Go away, you bad young man ! ” said she.

But you can imagine that she preferred this request in a most humble and gracious tone of voice. Then seeing that he did not move, she examined him more closely, and was much astonished at this so fine human nature when she recognized the young fellow, upon whom the fancy took her to perform some purely scientific experiments in the interests of hanged persons.

“ What is she doing ? ” said la Beaupertuys to the King.

“ She is trying to reanimate him. It is a work of Christian humanity.”

And the old girl rubbed and warmed this fine young man, supplicating Holy Mary the Egyptian to aid her to renew the life of this husband who had for her fallen so amorously from heaven, when, suddenly looking at the dead body she was so

charitably rubbing, she thought she saw a slight movement in the eyes; then she put her hand upon the man's heart, and felt it beat feebly. At length, from the warmth of the bed and of affection, and by the temperature of old maids, which is by far more burning than the warm blasts of African deserts, she had the delight of bringing to life that fine handsome young fellow, who by a lucky chance had been very badly hanged.

"See how my executioners serve me!" said Louis, laughing.

"Ah!" said la Beaupertuys, "you will not have him hanged again? he is too handsome."

"The decree does not say that he shall be hanged twice, but he shall marry the old woman."

Indeed, the good lady went in a great hurry to seek a master leech, a good bleeder, who lived in the abbey, and brought him back directly. He immediately took his lancet, and bled the young man. And as no blood came out: "Ah!" said he, "it is too late, the transshipment of blood in the lungs has taken place."

But suddenly this good young blood oozed out a little, and then came in abundance, and the hempen apoplexy, which had only just begun, was arrested in its course. The young man moved and came more to life; then he fell, from natural causes, into a state of great weakness and profound sadness, prostration of flesh and general flabbiness. Now the old maid, who was all eyes, and followed the great and notable changes which were taking place in the person of this badly hanged man, pulled the surgeon by the sleeve, and pointing out to him, by a curious glance of the eye, the piteous case, said to him:

"Will he for the future be always like that?"

"Often," replied the veracious surgeon.

"Oh! he was much nicer hanged!"

At this speech the King burst out laughing. Seeing him at

the window, the woman and the surgeon were much frightened, for this laugh seemed to them a second sentence of death for their poor victim. But the King kept his word, and married them. And in order to do justice he gave the husband the name of the *Sieur de Mortsau** in the place of the one he had lost upon the scaffold. As *la Godegrand* had a very big basket full of crowns, they founded a good family in Touraine, which still exists and is much respected, since *M. de Mortsau* faithfully served Louis the Eleventh on different occasions. Only he never liked to come across gibbets or old women, and never again made amorous assignations in the night.

This teaches us to thoroughly verify and recognize women, and not to deceive ourselves in the local difference which exists between the old and the young, for if we are not hanged for our errors of love, there are always great risks to run.

* See "The Lily of the Valley," in the *Comédie Humaine*.



THE HIGH CONSTABLE'S WIFE.

THE high constable of Armagnac espoused from the desire of a great fortune, the Countess Bonne, who was already considerably enamored of little Savoisy, son of the chamberlain to his majesty King Charles the Sixth.

The constable was a rough warrior, miserable in appearance, tough in skin, thickly bearded, always uttering angry words, always busy hanging people, always in the sweat of battles, or thinking of other stratagems than those of love. Thus this good soldier, caring little to flavor the marriage stew, used his charming wife after the fashion of a man with more lofty ideas ; of the which the ladies have a great horror, since they like not the joists of the bed to be the sole judges of their fondling and vigorous conduct.

Now the lovely countess, as soon as she was grafted on the constable, only nibbled more eagerly at the love with which her heart was laden for the aforesaid Savoisy, which that gentleman clearly perceived.

Wishing both to study the same music, they would soon harmonize their fancies, or decipher the hieroglyphic ; and this was a thing clearly demonstrated to the Queen Isabella, that Savoisy's horses were oftener stabled at the house of her cousin of Armagnac than in the Hôtel St. Pol, where the chamberlain lived, since the destruction of his residence, ordered by the university, as every one knows.

This discreet and wise princess, fearing in advance some unfortunate adventure for Bonne—the more so as the constable was as ready to brandish his broadsword as a priest to bestow benedictions—the said queen, as sharp as a dirk, said one day, while coming out from vespers, to her cousin, who was taking the holy water with Savoisy :

“ My dear, don't you see some blood in that water ? ”

“ Bah ! ” said Savoisy to the queen. “ Love likes blood, madame. ”

This the queen considered a good reply, and put it into writing, and, later on, into action, when her lord the King wounded one of her lovers, whose business you will see settled in this narrative.

You know by constant experience that in the early time of love each of two lovers is always in great fear of exposing the mystery of the heart, and as much from the flower of prudence as from the amusement yielded by the sweet tricks of gallantry they play at who can best conceal their thoughts. But one day of forgetfulness suffices to inter the whole virtuous past. The poor woman is taken in her joy as in a lasso ; her sweetheart proclaims his presence, or sometimes his departure, by some article of clothing—a scarf, a spur, left by some fatal chance, and there comes a stroke of the dagger that severs the web so gallantly woven by their golden delights. But when one is full of days, he should not make a wry face at death, and the sword of a husband is a pleasant death for a gallant, if there be pleasant deaths. So maybe we will furnish the merry amours of the constable's wife.

One morning Monsieur d'Armagnac, having lots of leisure time in consequence of the flight of the Duke of Burgundy, who was quitting Lagny, thought he would go and wish his lady good-day, and attempted to wake her up in a pleasant enough fashion, so that she should not be angry ; but she, sunk in the heavy slumbers of the morning, replied to the action :

“ Leave me alone, Charles ! ”

“ Oh, oh, ” said the constable, hearing the name of a saint who was not one of his patrons : “ I have a Charles on my head ! ”

Then, without touching his wife, he jumped out of the bed, and ran upstairs with his face flaming and his sword drawn,

to the place where slept the countess' maidservant, convinced that the said servant had a finger in the pie.

"Ah, ah, wench of hell!" cried he, to commence the discharge of his passion, "say thy prayers, for I intend to kill thee instantly, because of the secret practices of Charles who comes here."

"Ah, monseigneur," replied the woman, "who told you that?"

"Stand steady, that I may rip thee at one blow, if you do not confess to me every assignation given, and in what manner they have been arranged. If thy tongue gets entangled, if thou falterest, I will pierce thee with my dagger!"

"Pierce me through!" replied the girl; "you will learn nothing."

The constable, having taken this excellent reply amiss, ran her through on the spot, so mad was he with rage, and came back into his wife's chamber and said to his groom, whom, awakened by the shrieks of the girl, he met upon the stairs: "Go upstairs; I've corrected Billette rather severely."

Before he reappeared in the presence of Bonne he went to fetch his son, who was sleeping like a child, and led him roughly into her room. The mother opened her eyes pretty widely, you may imagine, at the cries of her little one; and was greatly terrified at seeing him in the hands of her husband, who had his right hand all bloody, and cast a fierce glance on the mother and son.

"What is the matter?" said she.

"Madame," asked the man of quick execution, "this child, is he the fruit of my loins, or those of Savois, your lover?"

At this question Bonne turned pale, and sprang upon her son like a frightened frog leaping into the water.

"Ah, he is really ours," said she.

"If you do not wish to see his head roll at your feet confess yourself to me, and no prevarication. You have given me a lieutenant."

“Indeed !”

“Who is he ?”

“It is not Savoisy, and I will never say the name of a man that I don’t know.”

Thereupon the constable rose, took his wife by the arm to cut her speech with a blow of the sword, but she, casting upon him an imperial glance, cried :

“Kill me if you will, but touch me not.”

“You shall live,” replied the husband, “because I reserve you for a chastisement more ample than death.”

And doubting the inventions, snares, arguments, and artifices familiar to women in these desperate situations, of which they study night and day the variations, by themselves, or between themselves, he departed with this rude and bitter speech. He went instantly to interrogate his servants, presenting to them a face divinely terrible ; so all of them replied to him as they would to God the Father on the Judgment Day, when each of us will be called to his account.

None of them knew of the serious mischief which was at the bottom of these summary interrogations and crafty inter-locutions ; but from all that they said, the constable came to the conclusion that no male in his house was in the business, except one of his dogs, whom he found dumb, and to whom he had given the post of watching the gardens ; so taking him in his hands, he strangled him with rage. This fact incited him by induction to suppose that the other constable came into his house by the garden, of which the only entrance was a postern opening on to the water-side.

It is necessary here to explain, to those who are ignorant of it, the locality of the Hôtel d’Armagnac, which had a notable situation near to the royal houses of St. Pol. On this site has since been built the Hôtel of Longueville. Then, as at the present time, the residence d’Armagnac had a porch of fine stone in the Rue St. Antoine, was fortified at all points, and the high walls by the river-side, in the face of the Ile du Vaches,

in the part where now stands the port of la Grève, were furnished with little towers. The design of this has for a long time been shown at the house of Cardinal Duprat, the King's chancellor. The constable ransacked his brains, and at the bottom, from his finest stratagems, drew the best, and fitted it so well to the present case that the gallant would be certain to be taken like a hare in the trap. "'Sdeath," said he, "my planter of horns is taken, and I have the time now to think how I shall finish him off."

Now this is the order of battle which this great hairy captain, who waged such glorious war against Duke Jean-sans-Peur, commanded for the assault of his secret enemy. He took a goodly number of his most loyal and adroit archers, and placed them in the quay tower, ordering them under the heaviest penalties to draw without distinction of persons, except his wife, on those of his household who should attempt to leave the gardens, and to admit therein, either by night or by day, the favored gentleman. The same was done on the porch side, in the Rue St. Antoine.

The retainers, even the chaplain, were ordered not to leave the house under pain of death. Then the guard of the two sides of the hôtel having been committed to the soldiers of a company of ordnance, who were ordered to keep a sharp lookout in the side-streets, it was certain that the unknown lover, to whom the constable was indebted for his pair of horns, would be taken warm, when, knowing nothing, he should come at the accustomed hour of love to insolently plant his standard in the heart of the legitimate appurtenances of the said lord count.

It was a trap into which the most expert man would fall unless he were seriously protected by the fates, as was the good St. Peter by the Saviour when he prevented him going to the bottom of the sea the day when they had a fancy to try if the sea were as solid as *terra firma*.

The constable had business with the inhabitants of Poissy,

and was obliged to be in the saddle after dinner, so that, knowing his intention, the poor Countess Bonne determined at night to invite her young gallant to that charming duel in which she was always the stronger.

While the constable was making round his hôtel a girdle of spies and of death, and hiding his people near the postern to seize the gallant as he came out, not knowing where he would spring from, his wife was not amusing herself by threading peas or seeing black cows in the embers. First, the maid-servant who had been stuck, unstuck herself and dragged herself to her mistress; she told her that her outraged lord knew nothing, and that before giving up the ghost she would comfort her dear mistress by assuring her that she could have perfect confidence in her sister, who was laundress in the hôtel, and was willing to let herself be chopped up as small as sausage-meat to please madame. This "she" was the most adroit and roguish woman in the neighborhood, and renowned from the council chamber to the Trahoir cross among the common people, as fertile in invention for the desperate cases of love.

Then, while weeping for the decease of her good chamber-woman, the countess sent for the laundress, made her leave her tubs and join her in rummaging the bag of good tricks, wishing to save Savoisie, even at the price of her future salvation.

First of all the two women determined to let him know their lord and master's suspicions, and beg him to be careful.

Now behold the good washerwoman, who, carrying her tub like a mule, attempts to leave the hôtel. But at the porch she found a man-at-arms who turned a deaf ear to all the blandishments of the wash-tub. Then she resolved, from her great devotion, to take the soldier on his weak side, and she tickled him so with her fondling that he romped very well with her, although he was armor-plated ready for battle; but when the game was over he still refused to let her go into the street, and

although she tried to get herself a passport sealed by some of the handsomest, believing them more gallant: neither the archers, men-at-arms, nor others, dared open for her the smallest entrance of the house. "You are wicked and ungrateful wretches," said she, "not to render me a like service."

Luckily at this employment she learned everything, and came back in great haste to her mistress, to whom she recounted the strange machinations of the count. The two women held a fresh council and had not considered, the time it takes to sing alleluiah, twice, these warlike appearances, watches, defenses, and equivocal, specious, and diabolical orders and dispositions before they recognized by the sixth sense, with which all females are furnished, the special danger which threatened the poor lover.

Madame, having learnt that she alone had leave to quit the house, ventured quickly to profit by her right, but she did not go the length of a bow-shot, since the constable had ordered four of his pages to be always on duty ready to accompany the countess, and two of the ensigns of his company not to leave her. Then the poor lady returned to her chamber, weeping as much as all the Magdalens one sees in the church pictures could weep together.

"Alas!" said she, "my lover must then be killed, and I shall never see him again!— he whose words were so sweet, whose manners were so graceful, that lovely head that has so often rested on my knees, will now be bruised. What! can I not throw to my husband an empty and valueless head in place of the one full of charms and worth—a rank head for a sweet-smelling one; a hated head for a head of love?"

"Ah, madame!" cried the washerwomen, "suppose we dress up, in the garments of a nobleman, the steward's son who is mad for me, and wearies me much, and having thus accoutred him, we push him out through the postern," she went on, wickedly.

Thereupon the two women looked at each other with assassinating eyes.

"This marplot," said she, "once slain, all those soldiers will fly away like geese."

"Yes, but will not the count recognize the wretch?"

And the countess, striking her breast, exclaimed, shaking her head: "No, no, my dear, here it is noble blood that must be spilt without stint."

Then she thought a little, and, jumping with joy, suddenly kissed the laundress, saying: "Because I have saved my lover's life by your counsel, I will pay you for his life until death."

Thereupon the countess dried her tears, put on the face of a bride, took her little bag and her prayer-book, and went toward the church of Saint-Pol, whose bells she heard ringing, seeing that the last mass was about to be said. In this sweet devotion the countess never failed, being a showy woman, like all the ladies of the Court. Now this was called the *full-dress mass*, because none but tip-tops, fashionables, young gentlemen and ladies puffed out and highly scented were to be met there. In fact, no dresses were seen there without armorial bearings, and no spurs that were not gilt.

So the Countess Bonne departed, leaving at the hotel the laundress much astonished, and charged to keep her eyes about her, and came with great pomp to the church, accompanied by her pages, the two ensigns and men-at-arms. It is here necessary to say that among the band of gallant knights who frisked round the ladies in church, the countess had more than one whose joy she was, and had given his heart to her, after the fashion of youths who put down enough and to spare upon their tablets, only in order to make a conquest of at least one out of a great number.

Among these fine birds of prey who with open beaks looked oftener between the benches and the paternosters than toward the altar and the priests, there was one upon whom

the countess sometimes bestowed the charity of a glance, because he was less trifling and more deeply smitten than all the others.

This one remained bashful, always stuck against the same pillar, never moving from it, but readily ravished with the sight alone of this lady whom he had chosen as his. His pale face was softly melancholy. His physiognomy gave proof of a fine heart, one of those which nourish ardent passions and plunge delightedly into the despairs of love without hope. Of these people there are few, because ordinarily one likes more a certain thing than the unknown felicities lying and flourishing at the bottommost depths of the soul!

This said gentleman, although his garments were well made, and clean and neat, having even a certain amount of taste shown in the arrangement, seemed to the constable's wife to be a poor knight seeking fortune, and come from afar, with his nobility for his portion. Now partly from a suspicion of his secret poverty, partly because she was well beloved by him, and a little because he had a good countenance, fine black hair, and a good figure, and remained humble and submissive in all, the constable's wife had wished for him the favor of women and of fortune, not to let his gallantry stand idle, and from a good housewifely idea, she fired his imagination according to her fantasies, by certain small favors and little looks which serpented toward him like biting adders, trifling with the happiness of his young life, like a princess accustomed to play with objects more precious than a simple knight. In fact, her husband risked the whole kingdom as you would a penny at piquet. Finally it was only three days since, at the conclusion of vespers, that the constable's wife, pointing out to the Queen this follower of love, said, laughing

"There's a man of quality."

This sentence remained in the fashionable language. Later it became a custom so to designate the people of the Court. It was to the wife of Constable d'Armagnac, and to no other

source, that the French language is indebted for this charming expression.

By a lucky chance the countess had surmised correctly concerning this gentleman. He was a bannerless knight named Julien de Boys-Bourredon, who not having inherited on his estate enough to make a toothpick, and knowing no other wealth than the rich nature with which his dead mother had opportunely furnished him, conceived the idea of deriving therefrom both rent and profit at Court, knowing how fond ladies are of these good revenues, and value them high and dear, when they can stand being looked at between two suns. There are many like him, who have thus taken the narrow road of women to make their way; but he, far from arranging his love in measured quantities, spent funds and all, as soon as, come to the full-dress mass, he saw the triumphant beauty of the Countess Bonne. Then he fell really in love, which was a grand thing for his crowns, because he lost both thirst and appetite. This love is of the worst kind, because it incites you to the love of diet, during the diet of love; a double malady, of which one is sufficient to extinguish a man.

Such was the young gentleman of whom the good lady had thought, and toward whom she came quickly to invite him to his death.

On entering, she saw the poor cavalier, who, faithful to his pleasure, awaited her, his back against a pillar, as a sick man longs for the sun, the spring-time, and the dawn. Then she turned away her eyes, and wished to go to the Queen and request her assistance in this desperate case, for she took pity on her lover, but one of the captains said to her, with great appearance of respect: "Madame, we have orders not to allow you to speak with man or woman, even though it should be the Queen or your confessor. And remember that the lives of all of us are at stake."

"Is it not your business to die?" said she.

"And also to obey," replied the soldier.

Then the countess knelt down in her accustomed place, and again regarding her faithful slave, found his face thinner and more deeply lined than ever it had been.

“Bah!” said she, “I shall have less remorse for his death; he is half-dead as it is.”

With this paraphrase of her idea, she cast upon the said gentleman one of those warm little ogles that are only allowable in princesses and harlots, and the false love which her lovely eyes bore witness to gave a pleasant pang to the gallant of the pillar. Who does not love the warm attack of life when it flows thus round the heart and engulfs everything?

Madame recognized with a pleasure, always fresh in the minds of women, the omnipotence of her magnificent regard by the answer which, without saying a word, the cavalier made to it. And, in fact, the blushes which empurpled his cheeks spoke better than the best speeches of the Greek and Latin orators, and was also well understood. At this sweet sight, the countess, to make sure that it was not a freak of nature, took pleasure in experimentalizing how far the virtue of her eyes would go, and after having heated her slave more than thirty times, she was confirmed in her belief that he would bravely die for her. This idea so touched her, that from three repetitions between her orisons she was tickled with the desire to put into a lump all the joys of man, and to dissolve them for him in one single glance of love, in order that she should not one day be reproached with having not only dissipated the life, but also the happiness of this gentleman. When the officiating priest turned round to sing the “Off you go”* to this fine gilded flock, the constable’s wife went out by the side of the pillar where her courtier was, passed in front of him and endeavored to insinuate into his understanding by a speaking glance that he was to follow her, and to make positive the intelligence and significant interpretation of this gentle appeal, the artful jade turned round again a little after passing

* The Benediction.

him to again request his company. She saw that he had moved a little from his place, and dared not advance, so modest was he, but upon this last sign, the gentleman, sure of not being over-credulous, mixed with the crowd with little and noiseless steps, like an innocent who is afraid of venturing in one of those good places people call bad ones. And whether he walked behind or in front, to the right or to the left, my lady bestowed upon him a glistening glance to allure him the more and the better to draw him to her, like a fisher who gently jerks the line in order to hook the gudgeon. To be brief: the countess practiced so well the profession of the daughters of pleasure when they work to bring grist into their mills, that one would have said nothing resembled a harlot so much as a woman of high birth. And indeed, on arriving at the porch of her hotel, the countess hesitated to enter therein, and again turned her face toward the poor cavalier to invite him to accompany her, discharging at him so diabolical a glance that he ran to the queen of his heart, believing himself to be called by her. Thereupon she offered him her hand, and both boiling and trembling from contrary causes found themselves inside the house. At this wretched hour, Madame d'Armagnac was ashamed of having done all these harlotries to the profit of death, and of betraying Savoisý the better to save him; but this slight remorse was lame as the greater, and came tardily. Seeing everything ready, the countess leaned heavily upon her vassal's arm, and said to him:

"Come quickly to my room; it is necessary that I should speak with you."

And he, not knowing that his life was in peril, found no voice wherewith to reply, so much did the hope of approaching happiness choke him.

When the laundress saw this handsome gentleman so quickly hooked: "Ah!" said she, "these ladies of the Court are the best at such work." Then she honored this courtier with a

profound salutation, in which was depicted the almost ironical respect due to those who have the great courage to die for so little.

"Picard," said the constable's lady, drawing the laundress to her by the skirt, "I have not the courage to confess to him the reward with which I am about to pay his silent love and his charming belief in the loyalty of women."

"Bah! madame, why tell him? Send him away well contented by the postern. So many men die in war for nothing, cannot this one die for something? I'd make another from him if that will console you."

"Come along," cried the countess, "I will confess all to him. That shall be the punishment for my sin."

Thinking that his lady was arranging with her servant certain trifling provisions and secret things in order not to be disturbed in the interview she had promised him, the unknown lover kept at a discreet distance, looking at the flies. Nevertheless, he thought that the countess was very bold, but also, as even a hunchback would have done, he found a thousand reasons to justify her, and thought himself quite worthy to inspire such recklessness. He was lost in these good thoughts when the constable's wife opened the door of her chamber, and invited the cavalier to follow her in. There his noble lady cast aside all the apparel of her lofty fortune, and, falling at the feet of this gentleman, became a simple woman.

"Alas, sweet sir!" said she, "I have acted vilely toward you. Listen. On your departure from this house, you will meet your death. The love which I feel for another has bewildered me, and without being able to hold his place here, you will have to take it before his murderers. This is the joy to which I have bidden you."

"Ah!" replied Boys-Bourredon, interring in the depths of his heart a dark despair, "I am grateful to you for having made use of me as of something which belonged to you——Yes, I love you so much that every day I have dreamed of

offering you, in imitation of the ladies, a thing that can be given but once.

“Take, then, my life!”

And the poor cavalier, in saying this, gave her one glance to suffice for all the time he would have been able to look at her through the long days. Hearing these brave and loving words, the countess rose suddenly.

“Ah! were it not for Savois, how I would love thee!” said she.

“Alas! my fate is then accomplished,” replied Boys-Bourredon. “My horoscope predicted that I should die by the love of a great lady. Ah, God!” said he, clutching his good sword, “I will sell my life dearly, but I shall die content in thinking that my decease assures the happiness of her I love. I shall live better in her memory than in reality.”

At the sight of the gesture and the beaming face of this courageous man, the constable’s wife was pierced to the heart. But soon she was wounded to the quick because he seemed to wish to leave her without even asking of her the smallest favor.

“Come, that I may arm you,” said she to him, making an attempt to kiss him.

“Ha! my lady-love,” replied he, moistening with a gentle tear the fire of her eyes, “would you render my death impossible by attaching too great a value to my life?”

“Come,” cried she, overcome by this intense love, “I do not know what the end of all this will be, but come—afterward we will go and perish together at the postern.”

The same flame leaped in their hearts, the same harmony had struck for both; they embraced each other with rapture in the delicious access of that mad fever which you know well, I hope; they fell into a profound forgetfulness of the dangers of Savois, of themselves, of the constable, of death, of life, of everything.

Meanwhile the watchman at the porch had gone to inform

the constable of the arrival of the gallant, and to tell him how the engaged gentleman had taken no notice of the winks which, during mass and on the road, the countess had given him in order to prevent his destruction. They met their master arriving in great haste at the postern, because on their side the archers of the quay had whistled to him afar off, saying to him :

“ The Sire de Savoisy has passed in.”

And indeed Savoisy had come at the appointed hour, and like all the lovers, thinking only of his lady, he had not seen the count's spies and had slipped in at the postern. This collision of lovers was the cause of the constable's cutting short the words of those who came from the Rue St. Antoine, saying to them with a gesture of authority, that they did not think wise to disregard :

“ I know that the animal is taken.”

Thereupon all rushed with a great noise through the said postern, crying: “ Death to him ! death to him ! ” and men-at-arms, archers, the constable, and the captains, all rushed full tilt upon Charles Savoisy, the King's nephew, whom they attacked just under the countess' window, where, by a strange chance, the groans of the poor young man were dolorously exhaled, mingled with the yells of the soldiers, at the same time as passionàte sighs and cries were given forth by the two lovers, who hastened up in great fear.

“ Ah,” said the countess, turning pale from terror, “ Savoisy is dying for me ! ”

“ But I will live for you,” replied Boys-Bourredon, “ and shall esteem it a joy to pay the same price for my happiness as he has done.”

“ Hide yourself in the clothes-chest,” cried the countess ; “ I hear the constable's footsteps.”

And indeed M. d'Armagnac appeared very soon with a head in his hand, and putting it all bloody on the mantel-shelf: “ Behold, madame,” said he, “ a picture which will

enlighten you concerning the duties of a wife toward her husband."

"You have killed an innocent man," replied the countess, without changing color. "Savoisy was not my lover."

And with this speech she looked proudly at the constable with a face marked by so much dissimulation and feminine audacity, that the husband stood looking as foolish as a girl who has allowed a note to escape her behind, before a numerous company, and he was afraid of having made a mistake.

"Of whom were you thinking this morning?" asked he.

"I was dreaming of the King," said she.

"Then, my dear, why not have told me so?"

"Would you have believed me in the bestial passion you were in?"

The constable scratched his ear and replied:

"But how came Savoisy with the key of the postern?"

"I don't know," said she, curtly, "if you will have the goodness to believe what I have said to you."

And his wife turned lightly on her heel like a weathercock turned by the wind, pretending to go and look after the household affairs. You can imagine that d'Armagnac was greatly embarrassed with the head of poor Savoisy, and that for his part Boys-Bourredon had no desire to cough while listening to the count, who was growling to himself all sorts of words. At length the constable struck two heavy blows over the table and said: "I'll go and attack the inhabitants of Poissy." Then he departed, and when the night was come Boys-Bourredon escaped from the house in some disguise or other.

Poor Savoisy was sorely lamented by his lady, who had done all that a woman could do to save her lover, and later he was more than wept, he was regretted; and the countess having related this adventure to Queen Isabella, her majesty seduced Boys-Bourredon from the service of her cousin and put him to her own, so much was she touched with the qualities and firm courage of this gentleman.

Boys-Bourredon was a man whom danger had well recommended to the ladies. In fact, he comported himself so proudly in everything in the lofty fortune which the Queen had made for him, that having badly treated King Charles one day when the poor man was in his proper senses, the courtiers, jealous of favor, informed the King of his cuckoldom. Then Boys-Bourredon was in a moment sewn in a sack and thrown into the Seine, near the ferry at Charenton, as every one knows. I have no need to add, that since the day when the constable took it into his head to play thoughtlessly with knives, his good wife utilized so well the two deaths he had caused and threw them so often in his face, that she made him as soft as a cat's paw and put him in the straight road of marriage; and he proclaimed her a modest and virtuous constable's lady, as indeed she was.

As this book should, according to the maxims of ancient great authors, join certain useful things to the good laughs which you will find therein and contain precepts of high taste, I beg to inform you that the quintessence of this story is this: That women need never lose their heads in serious cases, because the God of Love never abandons them, especially when they are beautiful, young, and of good family: and that gallants when going to keep an amorous assignation should never go there like giddy young men, but carefully, and keep a sharp lookout near the burrow, to avoid falling into certain traps and to preserve themselves; for after a good woman the most precious thing is, certes, a pretty gentleman.





THE MAID OF THILOUSE.

THE MAID OF THILOUSE.

THE lord of Valennes, a pleasant place, of which the castle is not far from the town of Thilouse, had taken a mean wife, who by reason of taste or antipathy, pleasure or displeasure, health or sickness, allowed her good husband to abstain from those pleasures stipulated for in all contracts of marriage. In order to be just, it should be stated that the above-mentioned lord was a dirty and ill-favored person, always hunting wild animals and not more entertaining than is a room full of smoke. And what is more, the said sportsman was all sixty years of age, on which subject, however, he was as silent as an hempen widow on the subject of rope. But nature, which the crooked, the bandy-legged, the blind, and the ugly abuse so unmercifully here below, and have no more esteem for her than the well-favored—since, like workers of tapestry, they know not what they do—gives the same appetite to all, and to all the same mouth for pudding. So every beast finds a mate, and from the same fact comes the proverb: “There is no pot, ugly all over, that does not one day find a cover.” Now the lord of Valennes searched everywhere for nice little pots to cover, and often in addition to wild, he hunted tame animals; but this kind of game was scarce in the land, and it was an expensive affair to discover a maid. At length, however, by reason of much ferreting about and much inquiry, it happened that the lord of Valennes was informed that in Thilouse was the widow of a weaver who had a real treasure in the person of a little damsel of sixteen years, whom she had never allowed to leave her apron-strings, and whom, with great maternal forethought, she always accompanied when the calls of nature demanded her obedience; she had her to sleep with her in her own bed, watched over her, got her up in the morning, and put her to such work that between the

twain they gained about eight pennies a day. On fête days she took her to the church, scarcely giving her a spare moment to exchange a merry word with the young people ; above all, she was strict in keeping hands off the maiden.

But the times were just then so hard that the widow and her daughter had only bread enough to save them from dying of hunger, and, as they lodged with one of their poor relations, they often wanted wood in winter and clothes in summer, owing enough rent to frighten sergeants of justice, men who are not easily frightened at the debts of others ; in short, while the daughter was increasing in beauty, the mother was increasing in poverty and ran into debt on account of her daughter's virginity, as an alchemist will for the crucible in which his all is cast. As soon as his plans were arranged and perfect, one rainy day the said lord of Valennes by a mere chance came into the hovel of the two spinners, and in order to dry himself sent for some fagots to le Plessis, close by. While waiting for them, he sat on a stool between the two poor women. By means of the gray shadows and half light of the cabin, he saw the sweet countenance of the maid of Thilouse ; her arms were red and firm, her breast hard as bastions, which kept the cold from her heart, her waist round as a young oak, and all fresh and clean and pretty, like a first frost ; green and tender as an April bud ; in fact, she resembled all that is prettiest in the world. She had eyes of a modest and virtuous blue, with a look more coy than that of the Virgin, for she was less forward, never having had a child.

Had any one said to her : " Come, let us make love," she would have said : " Love ! what is that ? " she was so innocent and so little open to the comprehension of the thing.

The good old lord twisted about upon his stool, eyeing the maid and stretching his neck like a monkey trying to catch nuts, which the mother noticed, but said not a word, being in fear of the lord, to whom the whole of the country belonged.

When the fagot was put into the grate and flared up, the good hunter said to the old woman: "Ah, ah! that warms one almost as much as your daughter's eyes."

"But, alas, my lord," said she, "we have nothing to cook on that fire."

"Oh, yes," replied he.

"What?"

"Ah, my good woman, lend your daughter to my wife, who has need of a good handmaiden; we will give you two fagots every day."

"Oh, my lord, what could I cook at such a good fire?"

"Why," replied the old rascal, "good broth, for I will give you a measure of corn in season."

"Then," replied the old hag, "where shall I put it?"

"In your dish," answered the lecherous purchaser of innocence.

"But I have neither dish nor flour-bin, nor anything."

"Well, I will give you dishes and flour-bins, saucepans, flagons, a good bed with curtains, and everything."

"Yes," replied the good widow, "but the rain would spoil them, I have no house."

"You can see from here," replied the lord, "the house of la Tourbellière, where lived my poor huntsman Pillegrain, who was ripped up by a boar?"

"Yes," said the old woman.

"Well, you can make yourself at home there for the rest of your days."

"By my faith!" cried the mother, letting fall her distaff, "do you mean what you say?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, what will you give my daughter?"

"All that she is willing to gain in my service."

"Oh! my lord, you are joking."

"No," said he.

"Yes!" said she.

“By St. Gatien, St. Eleuther, and by the thousand million saints who move in heaven, I swear that——”

“Ah! well; if you are not jesting I should like those fagots to pass through the hands of the notary.”

“By the blood of Christ and the charms of your daughter am I not a gentleman? is not my word good enough?”

“Ah! well, I don’t say that it is not; but as true as I am a poor spinner I love my child too much to leave her; she is too young and weak at present, she would break down in service. Yesterday, in his sermon, the vicar said that we should have to answer to God for our children.”

“There! there!” said the lord, “go and find the notary.”

An old woodcutter ran to the scrivener, who came and drew up a contract, to which the lord of Valennes put his cross, not knowing how to write, and when all was signed and sealed—

“Well, old lady,” said he, “now you are no longer answerable to God for the virtue of your child.”

“Ah! my lord, the vicar said until the age of reason, and my child is quite reasonable.” Then turning toward her, she added: “Marie Fiquet, that which is dearest to you is your honor, and there where you are going every one, without counting my lord, will try to rob you of it, but you see well what it is worth; for that reason do not lose it save willingly and in a proper manner. Now in order not to contaminate your virtue before God and before man, except for a legitimate motive, take heed that your chance of marriage be not damaged beforehand, otherwise you will go to the bad.”

“Yes, dear mother,” replied the maid.

And thereupon she left the poor abode of her relation, and came to the castle of Valennes, there to serve my lady, who found her both pretty and to her taste.

When the people of Valennes, Saché, Villaines, and other places learned the high price given for the maid of Thilouse, the good housewives, recognizing the fact that nothing is more

profitable than virtue, endeavored to nourish and bring up their daughters virtuous; but the business was as risky as that of rearing silkworms, which are liable to perish, since innocence is like a medlar, and ripens quickly on the straw. There were, however, some girls noted for it in Touraine, who passed for virgins in the convents of the religious, but I cannot vouch for these, not having proceeded to verify them in the manner laid down by Verville, in order to make sure of the perfect virtue of women. However, Marie Fiquet followed the wise counsel of her mother, and would take no notice of the soft requests, honeyed words, or apish tricks of her master, unless they were flavored with a promise of marriage.

When the old lord tried to kiss her, she would put her back up like a cat at the approach of a dog, crying out: "I will tell madame!" In short, at the end of six months he had not even recovered the price of a single fagot. From her labor la Fiquet became harder and firmer. Sometimes she would reply to the general request of her master: "When you have taken it from me will you give it me back again?" Another time she would say: "If I were as full of holes as a sieve not one should be for you, so ugly do I think you."

The good old man took these village sayings for flowers of innocence, and ceased not to make little signs to her, long harangues and a hundred vows and sermons, for by reason of seeing the fine breasts of the maid, her plump hips, which at certain movements came into prominent relief, and by reason of admiring other things capable of inflaming the mind of a saint, this dear man became enamored of her with an old man's passion, which augments in geometrical proportions as opposed to the passions of young men, because the old men love with their weakness, which grows greater, and the young with their strength, which grows less. In order to leave this headstrong girl no loophole for refusal, the old lord took into his confidence the steward, whose age was seventy-odd years, and made him understand that he ought to marry in order to

keep his body warm, and that Marie Fiquet was the very girl to suit him. The old steward, who had gained seventy-five hundred francs by services about the house, desired to live quietly without opening the front door again ; but his good master begged him to marry to please him, assuring him that he need not trouble about his wife. So the good steward wandered out of sheer good nature into this marriage. The day of the wedding, bereft of all her reasons, and not able to find objections to her pursuer, she made him give her a fat settlement and dowry as the price of her conquest, and then gave the old knave leave to wink at her as often as he could, promising him as many embraces as he had given grains of wheat to her mother. But at his age a bushel was sufficient.

The festivities over, the lord did not fail, as soon as his wife had retired, to wend his way toward the well-glazed, well-carpeted, and pretty room where he had lodged his lass, his money, his fagots, his house, his wheat, and his steward. To be brief, know that he found the maid of Thilouse the sweetest girl in the world, as pretty as anything, by the soft light of the fire which was gleaming in the chimney, snug between the sheets, with a sweet odor about her, as a young maiden should have, and in fact he had no regret for the great price of this jewel. Not being able to restrain himself from hurrying over the first mouthfuls of this royal morsel, the lord treated her more as a pastmaster than a young beginner. So the happy man, by too much gluttony, managed badly, and in fact knew nothing of the sweet business of love. Finding which, the good wench said, after a minute or two, to her old cavalier : “ My lord, if you are there, as I think you are, give a little more swing to your bells.”

From this saying, which became spread about, I know not how, Marie Fiquet became famous, and it is still said in our country : “ She is a maid of Thilouse,” in mockery of a bride, and to signify a *fricquenelle*.

“ Fricquenelle ” is said of a girl I do not wish you to find

in your arms on your wedding-night, unless you have been brought up in the philosophy of Zeno, which puts up with anything, and there are many people obliged to be stoics in this funny situation, which is often met with, for Nature turns but changes not, and there are always good maids of Thilouse to be found in Touraine, and elsewhere. Now if you ask me in what consists, or where comes in, the moral of this tale? I am at liberty to reply to the ladies, that the Droll Stories are made more to teach the moral of pleasure than to procure the pleasure of pointing a moral. But if it were a used-up old rascal who asked me, I should say to him, with all respect due to his yellow or gray locks, that God wished to punish the lord of Valennes for trying to purchase a jewel made to be given.



THE BROTHER IN ARMS.

AT the commencement of the reign of King Henry, the second of the name, who loved so well the fair Diane, there existed still a ceremony of which the usage has since become much weakened, and which has altogether disappeared, like an infinity of the good things of the olden times. This fine and noble custom was the choice which all knights made of a brother in arms. After having recognized each other as two loyal and brave men, each one of this pretty couple was married for life to the other; both became brothers, the one had to defend the other in battling against the enemies who threatened him, and at Court against the friends who slandered him. In the absence of his companion the other was expected to say to one who should have accused his good brother of any disloyalty, wickedness, or dark felony: "You have lied by your throat," and so go into the field instantly, so sure was the one of the honor of the other. There is no need to add that the one was always the second of the other in all affairs, good or evil, and that they shared all good or evil fortune. They were better than the brothers who are only united by the hazard of nature, since they were fraternized by the bonds of an especial sentiment, involuntary and mutual, and thus the fraternity of arms has produced splendid characters, as brave as those of the ancient Greeks, Romans, or others—— But this is not my subject; the history of these things has been written by the historians of our country, and every one knows them.

Now at this time two young gentlemen of Touraine, of whom one was the cadet of Maillé, and the other the Sieur de Lavallière, became brothers in arms on the day they gained their spurs. They were leaving the house of Monsieur de

Montmorency, where they had been nourished with the good doctrines of this great captain, and had shown how contagious is valor in such good company, for at the battle of Ravenna they merited the praises of the oldest knights. It was in the thick of this fierce fight that Maillé, saved by the said Lavallière, with whom he had a quarrel or two, perceived that this gentleman had a noble heart. As they had each received slashes in their doublets, they baptized their fraternity with their blood, and were ministered to together in one and the same bed under the tent of Monsieur de Montmorency their master. It is not necessary to inform you that, contrary to the custom of his family, which was always to have a pretty face, the cadet of Maillé was not of a pleasing physiognomy, and had scarcely any beauty but that of the devil. For the rest, he was lithe as a greyhound, broad-shouldered and strongly built as King Pepin, who was a terrible antagonist. On the other hand, the *Sieur de Chateau-Lavallière* was a dainty fellow, for whom seemed to have been invented rich laces, silken hose, and canceled shoes. His long, dark locks were pretty as a lady's ringlets, and he was, to be brief, a child with whom all the women would be glad to play. One day the dauphine, niece of the pope, said laughingly to the Queen of Navarre, who did not dislike these little jokes, "that this page was a plaster to cure every ache," which caused the pretty little Tourangeau to blush, because, being only sixteen, he took this gallantry as a reproach.

Now on his return from Italy the cadet of Maillé found the slipper of marriage ready for his foot, the which his mother had obtained for him in the person of *Mademoiselle d'Annebaut*, who was a graceful maiden of good appearance, and well furnished with everything, having a splendid hôtel in the *Rue Barbette*, with handsome furniture and Italian paintings and many considerable lands to inherit. Some days after the death of King Francis—a circumstance which planted terror in the hearts of every one, because his said majesty

had died in consequence of an attack of the Neapolitan sickness,* and that for the future there would be no security even with princesses of the highest birth—the above-named Maillé was compelled to quit the Court in order to go and arrange certain affairs of great importance in Piedmont. You may be sure that he was very loath to leave his good wife, so young, so delicate, so sprightly, in the midst of the dangers, temptations, snares, and pitfalls of this gallant assemblage, which comprised so many handsome fellows, bold as eagles, proud of mien, and as fond of women as the people are partial to Paschal hams. In this state of intense jealousy everything made him ill at ease; but by dint of much thinking, it occurred to him to make sure of his wife in the manner about to be related. He invited his good brother in arms to come at daybreak on the morning of his departure. Now directly he heard Lavallière's horse in the courtyard, he leaped out of the bed, leaving his sweet and fair better half sleeping that gentle, dreamy, dozing sleep so beloved by dainty ladies and lazy people. Lavallière came to him, and the two companions, hidden in the embrasure of the window, greeted each other with a loyal clasp of the hand, and immediately Lavallière said to Maillé:

"I should have been here last night in answer to thy summons, but I had a love-suit on with my lady, who had given me an assignation; I could in no way fail to keep it, but I quitted her at dawn. Shall I accompany thee? I have told her of thy departure, she has promised me to remain without any amour; we have made a compact. If she deceive me—well, a friend is worth more than a mistress!"

"Oh! my good brother," replied Maillé, quite overcome with these words: "I wish to demand of thee a still higher proof of thy brave heart. Wilt thou take charge of my wife, defend her against all, be her guide, keep her in check, and answer to me for the integrity of my head? Thou canst stay

* Syphilis. It was epidemic in the latter part of XV. Century.

here during my absence, in the green-room, and be my wife's cavalier."

Lavallière knitted his brow and said :

"It is neither thee nor thy wife that I fear, but evil-minded people, who will take advantage of this to entangle us like skeins of silk."

"Do not be afraid of me," replied Maillé, clasping Lavallière to his breast. "If it be the divine will of the Almighty that I shall have the misfortune to be a cuckold, I should be less grieved if it were to your advantage. But, by my faith, I should die of grief, for my life is bound up in my good, young, virtuous wife."

Saying which, he turned away his head, in order that Lavallière should not perceive the tears in his eyes; but the fine courtier saw this flow of water, and taking the hand of Maillé—

"Brother," said he to him, "I swear to thee on my honor as a man, that before any one lays a finger on thy wife, he shall have felt my dagger in the depth of his reins! And, unless I should die, thou shalt find her, on thy return, intact in body if not in heart, because thought is beyond the control of gentlemen."

"It is then decreed above," exclaimed Maillé, "that I shall always be thy servant and thy debtor!"

Thereupon the comrade departed, in order not to be inundated with the tears, exclamations, and other expressions of grief which ladies make use of when saying "Farewell." Lavallière, having conducted him to the gate of the town, came back to the house, waited until Marie d'Annebaut was out of bed, informed her of the departure of her good husband, and offered to place himself at her orders, in such a graceful manner, that the most virtuous woman would have been tickled with a desire to keep such a knight to herself. But there was no need of this fine paternoster to indoctrinate the lady, seeing that she had listened to the discourse of

the two friends, and was greatly offended at her husband's doubt. Alas! God alone is perfect! In all the ideas of men there is always a bad side, and it is therefore a great science in life, but an impossible science, to take hold of everything, even a stick, by the right end. The cause of the great difficulty there is in pleasing the ladies is, that there is in them a thing which is more woman than they are, and but for the respect which is due to them, I would use another word. Now we should never awaken the fantasy of this malevolent thing. The perfect government of women is a task to rend a man's heart, and we are compelled to remain in perfect submission to them; that is, I imagine, the best manner in which to solve the most agonizing enigma of marriage.

Now Marie d'Annebaut was delighted with the bearing and offers of the gallant; but there was something in her smile which indicated a malicious idea, and, to speak plainly, the intention of putting her young guardian between honor and pleasure; to regale him so with love, to surround him with so many little attentions, to pursue him with such warm glances, that he would be faithless to friendship, to the advantage of gallantry.

Everything was in perfect trim for the carrying out of her design, because of the companionship which the Sire de Lavallière would be obliged to have with her during his stay in the hôtel, and as there is nothing in the world can turn a woman from her whim, at every turn the artful jade was ready to catch him in a trap.

At times she would make him remain seated near her by the fire until twelve o'clock at night, singing soft refrains, and at every opportunity showing her fair shoulders, and the white temptations of which her corset was full, and casting upon him a thousand piercing glances, all without showing in her face the myriad of wicked yet pleasant thoughts that surged in her brain.

At times she would walk with him in the morning, in the gardens of the hôtel, leaning heavily upon his arm, pressing it, sighing, and making him tie the laces of her little shoes, which were always coming undone in that particular place. Then it would be those soft words and things which the ladies understand so well, little attentions paid to a guest, such as coming in to see if he were comfortable, if his bed were well made, the room clean, if the ventilation were good, if he felt any draughts in the night, if the sun came in during the day, and asking him to forego none of his usual fancies and habits, saying :

“Are you accustomed to take anything in the morning in bed, such as honey, milk, or spice? Do the meal-times suit you? I will conform mine to yours: tell me. You are afraid to ask me. Come——”

She accompanied these coddling little attentions with a hundred affected speeches; for instance, on coming into the room she would say:

“I am intruding, send me away. You want to be left alone—I will go.” And always was she graciously invited to remain.

And the cunning madame always came lightly attired, showing samples of her beauty, which would have made a patriarch neigh, even were he as much battered by time as must have been Mr. Methuselah, with his nine hundred and sixty years.

The good knight being as sharp as a needle, let the lady go on with her tricks, much pleased to see her occupy herself with him, since it was so much gained; but like a loyal brother, he always called her absent husband to the lady's mind.

Now one evening—the day had been very warm—Lavallière, suspecting the lady's games, told her that Maillé loved her dearly, that she had in him a man of honor, a gentleman who doted on her, and was ticklish on the score of his crown.

“Why, then, if he is so ticklish in this matter, has he placed you here?”

“Was it not a most prudent thing?” replied he. “Was it not necessary to confide you to some defender of your virtue? not that it needs one save to protect you from wicked men.”

“Then are you my guardian?” said she.

“I am proud of it!” exclaimed Lavallière.

“Ah!” said she, “he has made a very bad, an unlucky, choice.”

This remark was accompanied by a little look, so lewdly lascivious that the good brother in arms put on, by way of reproach, a severe countenance, and left the fair lady alone, much piqued at this refusal to commence love’s conflict.

She remained in deep meditation, and began to search for the real obstacle that she had encountered, for it was impossible that it should enter the mind of any lady that a gentleman could despise that little thing which is of such great price and so high value. Now these thoughts knitted and joined together so well, one fitting into the other, that out of little pieces she constructed a perfect whole, and found herself desperately in love; which should teach ladies never to play with a man’s weapons, seeing that, like glue, they always stick to the fingers.

By this means Marie d’Annebaut came to a conclusion which she should have known at the commencement—viz., that to keep clear of her snares, the good knight must be smitten with some other lady, and looking around her, to see where her young guest could have found a needle-case to his taste, she thought of the fair Limenil, one of Queen Catherine’s maids, of Mesdames de Nevers, d’Estrées, and de Giac, all of whom were declared friends of Lavallière’s, and of the lot he must love one to distraction.

From this belief, she added the motive of jealousy to the others which tempted her to seduce her Argus, whom she did

not wish to wound, but to perfume, kiss his head, and treat kindly.

She was certainly more beautiful, young, and more appetizing and gentle than her rivals; at least, that was the melodious decree of her imagination. So, urged on by the chords and springs of conscience, and physical causes which affect women, she returned to the charge to commence a fresh assault upon the heart of the cavalier, for the ladies like to take that which is well fortified.

Then she played the pussy-cat, and nestled up close to him, became so sweetly sociable, and wheedled him so gently, that one evening when she was in a desponding state, although merry enough in her inmost soul, her guardian-brother asked her :

“What is the matter with you?”

To which she replied to him dreamily, being listened to by him as the sweetest music—

That she had married Maillé against her heart's will, and that she was very unhappy; that she knew not the sweets of love; that her husband did not understand her, and that her life was full of tears. In fact, that she was a maiden in heart and all, since she confessed that in marriage she had experienced nothing but the reverse of pleasure. And she added, that surely this holy state should be full of the sweetmeats and dainties of love, because all the ladies hurried into it, and hated and were jealous of those who outbid them, for it cost certain people pretty dear; that she was so curious about it that for one good day or night of love, she would give her life, and always be obedient to her lover without a murmur; but that he with whom she would sooner than all others try the experiment would not listen to her; that, nevertheless, the secret of their loves might be kept eternally, so great was her husband's confidence in him; and that finally, if he still refused, it would kill her.

And all these paraphrases of the common canticle known to

the ladies at their birth were ejaculated between a thousand pauses, interrupted with sighs torn from the heart, ornamented with quiverings, appeals to heaven, upturned eyes, sudden blushings and clutchings at her hair. In fact, no ingredient of temptation was lacking in the dish, and at the bottom of all these words there was a nipping desire which embellished even its blemishes. The good knight fell at the lady's feet, and weeping took them and kissed them, and you may be sure the good woman was quite delighted to let him kiss them, and even without looking too carefully to see what he was going to do, she abandoned her dress to him, knowing well that to keep it from sweeping the ground it must be taken at the bottom to raise it; but it was written that for that evening she should be good, for the handsome Lavallière said to her with despair:

"Ah, madame, I am an unfortunate man and a wretch."

"Not at all," said she.

"Alas, the joy of loving you is denied to me."

"How?" said she.

"I dare not confess my situation to you!"

"Is it then very bad?"

"Ah, you will be ashamed of me!"

"Speak, I will hide my face in my hands," and the cunning madame hid her face in such a way that she could look at her well-beloved between her fingers.

"Alas!" said he, "the other evening, when you addressed me in such gracious words, I was so treacherously inflamed, that not knowing my happiness to be so near and not daring to confess my flame to you, I ran to a brothel where all the gentlemen go, and there for love of you, and to save the honor of my brother, whose head I should blush to dishonor, I was so badly infected that I am in great danger of dying of the Italian sickness."

The lady, seized with terror, gave vent to the cry of a woman in labor, and, with great emotion, repulsed him with

a gentle little gesture. Poor Lavallière, finding himself in so pitiable a state, went out of the room, but he had not even reached the tapestries of the door, when Marie d'Annebaut again contemplated him, saying to herself: "Ah! what a pity!" Then she fell into a state of great melancholy, pitying in herself the gentleman, and became the more in love with him because he was fruit three times forbidden.

"But for Maillé," said she to him, one evening that she thought him handsomer than usual, "I would willingly take your disease. Together we should then have the same terrors."

"I love you too well," said the ever-faithful brother, "not to be good."

And he left her to go to his beautiful Limeuil. You can imagine that being unable to refuse to receive the burning glances of the lady, during meal-times, and the evenings, there was a fire nourished that warmed them both, but she was compelled to live without touching her cavalier, otherwise than with her eyes. Thus occupied, Marie d'Annebaut was fortified at every point against the gallants of the Court, for there are no bounds so impassable as those of love, and no better guardian; it is like the devil, he whom it has in its clutches it surrounds with flames. One evening, Lavallière having escorted his friend's wife to a dance given by Queen Catherine, he danced with the fair Limeuil, with whom he was madly in love. At that time the knights carried on their amours bravely two by two, and even in troops. Now all the ladies were jealous of la Limeuil, who at that time was thinking of yielding to the handsome Lavallière. Before taking their places in the quadrille, she had given him the sweetest of assignations for the morrow, during the hunt. Our great Queen Catherine, who from political motives fomented these loves and stirred them up, like pastry-cooks make their oven fires burn by poking, glanced at all the pretty couples interwoven in the quadrille, and said to her husband:

"When they combat here, can they conspire against you, eh?"

"Ah! but the Protestants?"

"Bah! have them here as well," said she, laughing. "Why, look at Lavallière, who is suspected to be a Huguenot; he is converted by my dear little Limeuil, who does not play her cards badly for a young lady of sixteen. He will soon have her name down in his list."

"Ah, madame! do not believe it," said Marie d'Annebaut, "he is ruined through that same sickness of Naples which made you Queen."

At this artless confession, Catherine, the fair Diane, and the King, who were sitting together, burst out laughing, and the thing ran round the room. This brought endless shame and mockery upon Lavallière. The poor gentleman, pointed at by every one, soon wished somebody else in his shoes, for la Limeuil, whom his rivals had not been slow laughingly to warn of her danger, appeared to shrink from her lover, so rapid was the spread and so violent the apprehensions of this nasty disease. Thus Lavallière found himself abandoned by every one like a leper. The King made an offensive remark, and the good knight quitted the ballroom, followed by poor Marie in despair at the speech. She had in every way ruined the man she loved; she had destroyed his honor and marred his life, since the physicians and master-surgeons advanced as a fact, incapable of contradiction, that persons Italianized by this love-sickness lost through it their greatest attractions, as well as their generative powers, and their bones went black.

Thus no woman would bind herself in legitimate marriage with the finest gentleman in the kingdom if he were only suspected of being one of those whom Master Francis Rabelais named "*his very precious scabby ones*."

As the handsome knight was very silent and melancholy, his companion said to him on the road home from Hercules House, where the fête had been held:

"My dear lord, I have done you a great and irreparable mischief."

"Ah, madame!" replied Lavallière, "my hurt is curable; but into what a predicament have you fallen? You should not have been aware of the danger of my love."

"Ah!" said she, "I am sure now always to have you to myself; in exchange for this great obloquy and dishonor, I will be forever your friend, your hostess, and your lady-love—more than that, your servant. My determination is to devote myself to you and efface the traces of this shame; to cure you by watch and ward; and if the learned in these matters declare that the disease has such hold of you that it will kill you like our defunct sovereign, I must still have your company in order to die gloriously in dying of your complaint. Even then," said she, weeping, "that will not be penance enough to atone for the wrong I have done you."

These words were accompanied with big tears; her virtuous heart waxed faint, she fell to the ground exhausted. Lavallière, terrified, caught her and placed his hand upon her heart, above a breast of matchless beauty. The lady revived at the warmth of this beloved hand, experiencing such exquisite delights as nearly to make her again unconscious.

"Alas!" said she, "this sly and superficial caress will be for the future the only pleasure of our love. It will still be a hundred times better than the joys which poor Maillé fancies he is bestowing on me. Leave your hand there," said she; "verily it is upon my soul, and touches it."

At these words the knight was in a pitiful plight, and innocently confessed to the lady that he experienced so much pleasure at this touch that the pains of his malady increased, and that death was preferable to this martyrdom.

"Let us die, then," said she.

But the litter was in the courtyard of the hotel, and as the means of death were not handy, each one slept far from the other, heavily weighed down with love, Lavallière having lost

his fair Limeuil, and Marie d'Annebaut having gained pleasures without parallel.

From this affair, which was quite unforeseen, Lavallière found himself under the ban of love and marriage and dared no longer appear in public, and he found how much it costs to guard the virtue of a woman ; but the more honor and virtue he displayed the more pleasure did he experience in these great sacrifices offered at the shrine of brotherhood. Nevertheless, his duty was very bitter, very ticklish, and intolerable to perform, toward the last days of his guard. And in this way :

The confession of her love, which she believed was returned, the wrong done by her to her cavalier, and the experience of an unknown pleasure, emboldened the fair Marie, who fell into a platonic love, gently tempered with those little indulgences in which there is no danger. From this cause sprang the diabolical pleasures of the game invented by the ladies, who since the death of Francis the First feared the contagion, but wished to gratify their lovers. To these cruel delights, in order properly to play his part, Lavallière could not refuse his sanction. Thus every evening the mournful Marie would attach her guest to her petticoats, holding his hands, kissing him with burning glances, her cheek placed gently against his, and during this virtuous embrace, in which the knight was held like the devil by a holy water brush, she told him of her great love, which was boundless since it stretched through the infinite spaces of unsatisfied desire. All the fire with which ladies endow their substantial amours, when the night has no other lights than their eyes, she transferred into the mystic motions of her head, the exultations of her soul, and the ecstasies of her heart. Then, naturally, and with the delicious joy of two angels united by thought alone, they intoned together those sweet litanies repeated by the lovers of the period in honor of love—anthems which the abbot of Theleme has paraphrastically saved from oblivion by engraving them on

the walls of his abbey, situated, according to Master Alcofribas, in our land of Chinon, where I have seen them in Latin, and have translated them for the benefit of Christians :

“Alas !” said Marie d’Annebaut, “thou art my strength and my life, my joy and my treasure.”

“And you,” replied he, “you are a pearl, an angel.”

“Thou art my seraph.”

“You my soul.”

“Thou my God.”

“You my evening star and morning star, my honor, my beauty, my universe.”

“Thou my great, my divine master.”

“You my glory, my faith, my religion.”

“Thou my gentle one, my handsome one, my courageous one, my dear one, my cavalier, my defender, my king, my love.”

“You my fairy, the flower of my days, the dream of my nights.”

“Thou my thought at every moment.”

“You the delight of my eyes.”

“Thou the voice of my soul.”

“You my light by day.”

“Thou my glimmer in the night.”

“You the best beloved among women.”

“Thou the most adored of men.”

“You my blood, a myself, better than myself.”

“Thou my heart, my lustre.”

“You my saint, my only joy.”

“I yield thee the palm of love, and how great soe’er mine be, I believe thou lovest me still more, for thou, thou art the lord.”

“No ; the palm is yours, my goddess, my Virgin Mary.”

“No ; I am thy servant, thine handmaiden, a nothing thou canst crush to atoms.”

“No, no ; it is I who am your slave, your faithful page,

whom you use as a breath of air, upon whom you can walk as on a carpet. My heart is your throne."

"No, dearest, for thy voice transfigures me."

"Your regard burns me."

"I see but thee."

"I love but you."

"Oh, put thine hand upon my heart—only thine hand—and thou wilt see me pale, when my blood shall have taken the heat of thine."

Then during these struggles their eyes, already ardent, flamed still more brightly, and the good knight was a little the accomplice of the pleasure which Marie d'Annebaut took in feeling his hand upon her heart. Now, as in this light embrace all their strength was put forth, all their desires strained, all their ideas of the thing concentrated, it happened that the knight's transport reached a climax. Their eyes wept warm tears, they seized each other hard and fast as fire seizes houses; but that was all. Lavallière had promised to return safe and sound to his friend the body only, not the heart.

When Maillé announced his return, it was quite time, since no virtue could avoid melting upon this gridiron; and the less license the lovers had the more pleasure they had in their fantasies.

Leaving Marie d'Annebaut, the good companion in arms went as far as Bondy to meet his friend, to help him to pass through the forest without accident, and the two brothers slept together, according to the ancient custom, in the village of Bondy.

There, in their bed, they recounted to each other, one the adventures of his journey, the other the gossip of the camp, stories of gallantry, and the rest. But Maillé's first question was touching Marie d'Annebaut, whom Lavallière swore to to be intact in that precious place where the honor of husbands is lodged; at which the amorous Maillé was highly delighted.

On the morrow they were all three reunited, to the great disgust of Marie, who, with the high jurisprudence of women, made a great fuss with her good husband, but with her finger she indicated her heart in an artless manner to Lavallière, as one who said : " This is thine ! "

At supper Lavallière announced his departure for the wars. Maillé was much grieved at this resolution, and wished to accompany his brother ; but Lavallière refused him point-blank.

" Madame," said he to Marie d'Annebaut, " I love you more than life, but not more than honor."

He turned pale, saying this, and Madame de Maillé blanched hearing him, because never in their amorous dalliance had there been so much true love as in this speech. Maillé insisted upon keeping his friend company as far as Meaux. When he came back, he was talking over with his wife the unknown reasons and secret causes of this departure, when Marie, who suspected the grief of poor Lavallière, said : " I know ; he is ashamed to stop here because he has the Neapolitan sickness."

" He ! " said Maillé, quite astonished. " I saw him when we were in bed together at Bondy the other evening and yesterday at Meaux. There's nothing the matter with him ; he is as sound as a bell."

The lady burst into tears, admiring this great loyalty, the sublime resignation to his oath, and the extreme sufferings of this internal passion. But as she still kept her love in the recesses of her heart, she died when Lavallière fell before Metz, as has been elsewhere related by Messire Bourdeilles de Brantôme in his tittle-tattle.

THE VICAR OF AZAY-LE-RIDEAU.

IN those days the priests no longer took any woman in legitimate marriage, but kept good mistresses as pretty as they could get; which custom has since been interdicted by the Council, as every one knows, because, indeed, it was not pleasant that the private confessions of people should be retold to a wench who would laugh at them, beside the other secret doctrines, ecclesiastical arrangements, and speculations which are part and parcel of the politics of the Church of Rome. The last priest in our country who theologically kept a woman in his parsonage, regaling her with his scholastic love, was a certain vicar of Azay-le-Ridel, a place later on most aptly named Azay-le-Brulé, and now Azay-le-Rideau, whose castle is one of the marvels of Touraine. Now this said period, when the women were not averse to the odor of the priesthood, is not so far distant as some may think, for Monsieur d'Orgemont, son of the preceding bishop, still held the see of Paris, and the great quarrels of the Armagnacs had not finished. To tell the truth, this vicar did well to have his vicarage in that age, since he was well shapen, of a high color, stout, big, strong, eating and drinking like a convalescent, and, indeed, was always rising from a little malady that attacked him at certain times; and, later on, he would have been his own executioner, had he determined to observe the canonical continence. Add to this that he was a Tourangeau—that is, dark—and had in his eyes flame to light, and water to quench all the domestic furnaces that required lighting or quenching; and never since at Azay has been such vicar seen! A handsome vicar was he, square-shouldered, fresh-colored, always blessing and chuckling, preferring weddings and christenings to funerals, a good joker, pious in church, and a man in

everything. There have been many vicars who have drunk well and eaten well ; others who have blessed abundantly and chuckled consumedly ; but all of them together would hardly make up the sterling worth of this aforesaid vicar ; and he alone has worthily filled his post with benedictions, has held it with joy, and in it has consoled the afflicted, all so well, that no one saw him come out of his house without wishing to be in his heart, so much was he beloved. It was he who first said in a sermon that the devil was not so black as he was painted, and who for Madame de Candé transformed partridges into fish, saying that the perch of the Indre were partridges of the river, and, on the other hand, partridges perch in the air. He never played artful tricks under the cloak of morality, and often said, jokingly, he would rather be in a good bed than in anybody's will, that he had plenty of everything, and wanted nothing. As for the poor and suffering, never did those who came to ask for wool at the vicarage go away shorn, for his hand was always in his pocket, and he melted (he who in all else was so firm) at the sight of all this misery and infirmity, and he endeavored to heal all their wounds. There have been many good stories told concerning this king of vicars. It was he who caused such hearty laughter at the wedding of the lord of Valennes, near Sacché. The mother of the said lord had a good deal to do with the victuals, roast meats, and other delicacies, of which there was sufficient quantity to feed a small town at least, and it is true, at the same time, that people came to the wedding from Montbazon, from Tours, from Chinon, from Langeais, and from everywhere, and stopped eight days.

Now the good vicar, as he was going into the room where the company were enjoying themselves, met a little kitchen boy, who wished to inform madame that all the elementary substances and fat rudiments, syrups, and sauces were in readiness for a pudding of great delicacy, the secret compilation, mixing, and manipulation of which she wished herself

to superintend, intending it as a special treat for her daughter-in-law's relations. Our vicar gave the boy a tap on the cheek, telling him that he was too greasy and dirty to show himself to people of high rank, and that he himself would deliver the said message. The merry fellow pushes open the door, shapes the fingers of his left hand into the form of a sheath, and moves gently therein the middle finger of his right, at the same time looking at the lady of Valennes and saying to her: "Come, all is ready." Those who did not understand the affair burst out laughing to see madame get up and go to the vicar, because she knew he referred to the pudding, and not to that which the others imagined.

But a true story is that concerning the manner in which this worthy pastor lost his mistress, to whom the ecclesiastical authorities allowed no successor; but, as for that, the vicar did not want for domestic utensils. In the parish every one thought it an honor to lend him theirs, the more readily because he was not the man to spoil anything, and was careful to clean them out thoroughly, the dear man. But here are the facts: One evening the good man came home to supper with a melancholy face, because he had just put into the ground a good farmer, whose death came about in a strange manner, and is still frequently talked about in Azay. Seeing that he only ate with the end of his teeth, and turned up his nose at a dish of tripe, which had been cooked in his own especial manner, his good woman said to him:

"Have you passed before the Lombard" (see "Maitre Cornélius" *passim*), "met two black crows, or seen the dead man turn in his grave, that you are so upset?"

"Oh! oh!"

"Has any one deceived you?"

"Ha! ha!"

"Come, tell me!"

"My dear, I am still quite overcome at the death of poor Cohegrue, and there is not at the present moment a good

housewife's tongue or a virtuous cuckold's lips that are not talking about it."

"And what is it?"

"Listen! This poor Cohegrue was returning from market, having sold his corn and two fat pigs. He was riding his pretty mare, who, near Azay, commenced to caper about without the slightest cause, and poor Cohegrue trotted and ambled along counting his profits. At the corner of the old road of the Landes de Charlemagne they came upon a stallion kept by the Sieur de la Carte, in a field, in order to have a good breed of horses, because the said animal was fleet of foot, as handsome as an abbot, and so high and mighty that the admiral, who came to see it, said it was a beast of the first quality. This cursed horse scented the pretty mare; like a cunning beast, it neither neighed nor gave vent to any equine ejaculation, but, when she was close to the road, leaped over forty rows of vines and galloped after her, pawing the ground with his iron shoes, discharging the artillery of a lover who longs for an embrace, giving forth sounds to set the strongest teeth on edge, and so loudly, that the people of Champy heard it and were much terrified thereat. Cohegrue, suspecting the affair, makes for the moors, spurs his amorous mare, relying upon her rapid pace, and indeed the good mare understands, obeys, and flies—flies like a bird; but a bowshot off follows the blessed horse, thundering along the road like a blacksmith beating iron, and at full speed, his mane flying in the wind, replying to the sound of the mare's swift gallop with his terrible pat-a-pan! pat-a-pan! Then the good farmer, feeling death following him in the love of the beast, spurs anew his mare, and harder still she gallops, until at last, pale and half-dead with fear, he reaches the outer yard of his farmhouse, but finding the door of the stable shut he cries: 'Help here! wife!' Then he turned round on his mare, thinking to avoid the cursed beast whose love was burning, who was wild with passion, and growing more amorous every moment,

to the great danger of the mare. His family, horrified at the danger, did not go to open the stable door, fearing the strange embrace and the kicks of the iron-shod lover. At last Cohegrue's wife went, but, just as the good mare was half-way through the door, the cursed stallion seized her, squeezed her, gave a wild greeting, with his two legs gripped her, pinched her and held her tight, and at the same time so kneaded and knocked about poor Cohegrue, that there was only found of him a shapeless mass, crushed like a nut after the oil has been distilled from it. It was shocking to see him squashed alive and mingling his cries with the loud love-sighs of the horse."

"Oh! the mare!" exclaimed the vicar's good wench.

"What!" said the priest, astonished.

"Certainly. You men wouldn't have cracked a plum-stone for us."

"There," answered the vicar, "you wrong me." The good man threw her angrily upon the bed, attacked and treated her so violently that she split into pieces, and died immediately without either surgeons or physicians being able to determine the manner in which the solution of continuity was arrived at, so violently disjointed were the hinges and mesial partitions. You can imagine that he was a proud man, and a splendid vicar, as has been previously stated.

The good people of the country, even the women, agreed that he was not to blame, but that his conduct was warranted by the circumstances.

From this perhaps came the proverb so much in use at that time: *Que l'aze le saille!* The which proverb is really so much coarser in its actual wording, that out of respect for the ladies I will not mention it. But this was not the only clever thing this great and noble vicar achieved, for before this misfortune he did such a stroke of business that no robbers dare ask him how many angels he had in his pocket, even had they been twenty strong and over to attack him. One even-

ing, when his good woman was still with him, after supper, during which he had enjoyed his goose, his wench, his wine and everything, and was reclining in his chair thinking where he could build a new barn for the tithes, a message came for him from the lord of Sacché, who was giving up the ghost and wished to reconcile himself to God, receive the sacrament, and go through the usual ceremonies. "He is a good man and loyal lord. I will go," said he. Thereupon he passed into the church, took the silver box where the blessed bread is, rang the little bell himself in order not to wake his clerk, and went lightly and willingly along the road. Near the Gué-droit, which is a valley leading to the Indre across the moors, our good vicar perceived a high toby. And what is a high toby? It is a clerk of St. Nicholas. Well, what is that? That means a person who sees clearly on a dark night, instructs himself by examining and turning over purses, and takes his degrees on the high road. Do you understand now? Well then, this high toby waited for the silver box, which he knew to be of great value.

"Oh! oh!" said the priest, putting down the sacred vase on a stone at the corner of a bridge, "stop thou there without moving."

Then he walked up to the robber, tripped him up, seized his loaded stick, and when the rascal got up to struggle with him, he gutted him with a blow well planted in the middle of his stomach. Then he picked up the viaticum again, saying bravely to it: "Ah, if I had relied upon thy providence, we should have been lost." Now to utter these impious words upon the high road to Sacché was mere waste of breath, seeing that he addressed them not to God, but to the archbishop of Tours, who had once severely rebuked him, threatened him with suspension, and admonished him before the chapter for having publicly told certain lazy people that a good harvest was not due to the grace of God, but to skilled labor and hard work—a doctrine which smelt of the fagot. And indeed he

was wrong, because the fruits of the earth have need both of one and the other ; but he died in this heresy, for he could never understand how crops could come without digging, if God so willed it—a doctrine that learned men have since proved to be true, by showing that formerly wheat grew very well without the aid of man. I cannot leave this splendid model of a pastor without giving here one of the acts of his life, which proves with what fervor he imitated the saints in the division of their goods and mantles, which they gave formerly to the poor and the passers-by. One day, returning from Tours, where he had been paying his respects to the official, mounted on his mule, he was nearing Azay. On the way, just outside Ballan, he met a pretty girl on foot and was grieved to see a woman traveling like a dog ; the more so as she was visibly fatigued, and could scarcely raise one foot before the other. He whistled to her softly, and the pretty wench turned round and stopped. The good priest, who was too good a sportsman to frighten the birds, especially the hooded ones, begged her so gently to ride behind him on his mule, and in so polite a fashion, that the lass got up ; not without making those little excuses and grimaces that they all make when one invites them to eat, or to take what they like. The sheep paired off with the shepherd, the mule jogged along after the fashion of mules, while the girl slipped now this way, now that, riding so uncomfortably that the priest pointed out to her, after leaving Ballan, that she had better hold on to him ; and immediately my lady put her plump arms round the waist of her cavalier, in a modest and timorous manner.

“There, you don’t slip about now. Are you comfortable?” said the vicar.

“Yes, I am comfortable. Are you?”

“I?” said the priest ; “I am better than that.”

And, in fact, he was quite at his ease, and was soon gently warmed in the back by two projections which rubbed against it, and at last seemed as though they wished to imprint them-

THE VICAR OF AZAY-LE-RIDEAU.



selves between his shoulder-blades, which would have been a pity, as that was not the place for this white merchandise. By degrees the movement of the mule brought into conjunction the internal warmth of these two good riders, and their blood coursed more quickly through their veins, seeing that it felt the motion of the mule as well as their own; and thus the good wench and the vicar finished by knowing each other's thoughts, but not those of the mule. When they were both acclimatized, he with her and she with him, they felt an internal disturbance which resolved itself into secret desires.

"Ah!" said the vicar, turning round to his companion, "here is a fine cluster of trees which has grown very thick."

"It is so near the road," replied the girl. "Bad boys have cut the branches, and the cows have eaten the young leaves."

"Are you not married?" asked the vicar, trotting his animal again.

"No," said she.

"Not at all?"

"I' faith! No!"

"What a shame, at your age!"

"You are right, sir; but, you see, a poor girl who has had a child is a bad bargain."

Then the good vicar taking pity on such ignorance, and knowing that the canons say among other things that pastors should indoctrinate their flock and show them the duties and responsibilities of this life, he thought he would only be discharging the functions of his office by showing her the burden she would one day have to bear. Then he begged her gently not to be afraid, for if she would have faith in his loyalty no one should ever know of the marital experiment which he proposed then and there to perform with her; and as, since passing Ballan, the girl had thought of nothing else; as her desire had been carefully sustained and augmented by the warm movements of the animal, she replied harshly to the

vicar : " If you talk thus I will get down." Then the good vicar continued his gentle requests so well that on reaching the wood of Azay the girl wished to get down, and the priest got down there too, for it was not across a horse that this discussion could be finished. Then the virtuous maiden ran into the thickest part of the wood to get away from the vicar, calling out : " Oh, you wicked man, you sha'n't know where I am."

The mule arrived in a glade where the grass was good, the girl tumbled down over a root and blushed. The good vicar came to her, and there as he had rung the bell for mass he went through the service for her, and both freely discounted the joys of paradise. The good priest had it in his heart to thoroughly instruct her, and found his pupil very docile, as gentle in mind as soft in the flesh, a perfect jewel. Therefore was he much grieved at having so much abridged the lesson by giving it at Azay, seeing that he would have been quite willing to recommence it, like all preceptors who say the same thing over and over again to their pupils.

" Ah, little one," cried the good man, " why did you make so much a fuss that we only came to an understanding close to Azay? "

" Ah ! " said she, " I belong to Ballan."

To be brief, I must tell you that when this good man died in his vicarage there was a great number of people, children and others, who came, sorrowful, afflicted, weeping, and grieved, and all exclaimed : " Ah ! we have lost our father ! " And the girls, the widows, the wives, and the little girls looked at each other, regretting him more than a friend, and said : " He was more than a priest, he was a man ! " Of these vicars the seed is cast to the winds, and they will never be reproduced in spite of the seminaries.

Why, even the poor, to whom his savings were left, found themselves still the losers ; and an old cripple whom he had succored hobbled into the churchyard, crying : " I don't die !

I don't die ! ” meaning to say : “ Why did not death take me in his place ? ” This made some of the people laugh, at which the shade of the good vicar would certainly not have been displeased.



THE REPROACH.

THE fair laundress of Portillon-les-Tours, of whom a droll saying has already been given in this book (see "The High Constable's Wife"), was a girl blessed with as much cunning as if she had stolen that of six priests and three women at least. She did not want for sweethearts, and had so many that one would have compared them, seeing them around her, to bees swarming of an evening toward their hive. An old silk dyer, who lived in the Rue Montfumier, and there possessed a house of scandalous magnificence, coming from his place at la Grenadière, situated on the fair borders of St. Cyr, passed on horseback through Portillon in order to gain the bridge of Tours. By reason of the warmth of the evening, he was seized with a wild desire on seeing the pretty washerwoman sitting upon her door-step. Now as for a very long time he had dreamed of this merry maid, his resolution was taken to make her his wife, and in a short time she was transformed from a washerwoman into a dyer's wife, a good townswoman with laces, fine linen, and furniture to spare, and was happy in spite of the dyer, seeing that she knew very well how to manage him. The good dyer had for a crony a silk machinery manufacturer, who was small in stature, deformed for life, and full of wickedness. So on the wedding-day he said to the dyer: "You have done well to marry, my friend; *we* shall have a pretty wife;" and a thousand sly jokes, such as it is usual to address to a bridegroom.

In fact, this said hunchback courted the dyer's wife, who from her nature cared little for badly built people, laughed to scorn the request of the mechanician, and joked him about the springs, engines, and spools of which his shop was full. However, this great love of the hunchback was rebuffed by

nothing, and became so irksome to the dyer's wife that she resolved to cure it by a thousand practical jokes. One evening, after the never-ceasing pursuit, she told her lover to come to the back-door and toward midnight she would open everything to him. Now note, this was on a winter's night; the Rue Montfumier is close by the Loire, and in this corner there continually blow, in winter, winds sharp as a hundred needle-points. The good hunchback, well muffled up in his mantle, failed not to come, and trotted up and down to keep himself warm while waiting the appointed hour. Toward midnight he was half-frozen, as fidgety as thirty-two devils caught in a stole, and was about to give up his happiness, when a feeble light passed by the cracks of the window and came down toward the little door.

"Ah, it is she!" said he.

And this hope warmed him once more. Then he got close to the door, and heard a little voice—

"Are you there?" said the dyer's wife to him.

"Yes."

"Cough, that I may see."

The hunchback began to cough.

"It is not you."

Then the hunchback said aloud:

"How do you mean it is not I? Do you not recognize my voice? Open the door!"

"Who's there?" said the dyer, opening his window.

"There, you have awakened my husband, who returned from Amboise unexpectedly this evening."

Thereupon the dyer, seeing by the light of the moon a man at the door, threw a good big pot of cold water over him, and cried out: "Thieves! thieves!" in such a manner that the hunchback was forced to run away; but in his fear he failed to clear the chain stretched across the bottom of the road, and fell into the common sewer, which the sheriff had not then replaced by a sluice to discharge the mud into the Loire.

In this bath the machinist expected every moment to breathe his last, and cursed the fair Tascherette, for, her husband's name being Taschereau, so was she called by the way of a little joke by the people of Tours.

Carandas—for so was named the manufacturer of machines to weave, to spin, to spool, and wind the silk—was not sufficiently smitten to believe in the innocence of the dyer's wife, and swore a devilish hate against her. But some days afterward, when he had recovered from his wetting in the dyer's drain, he came to sup with his old comrade. Then the dyer's wife reasoned with him so well, flavored her words with so much honey, and wheedled him with so many fair promises, that he dismissed his suspicions. He asked for a fresh assignation, and the fair Tascherette, with the face of a woman whose mind is dwelling on the subject, said to him: "Come to-morrow evening; my husband will be staying some days at Chenonceaux. The Queen wishes to have some of her old dresses dyed and must settle the colors with him. It will take some time.

Carandas put on his best clothes, failed not to keep the appointment, appeared at the time fixed, and found a good supper prepared, lampreys, wine of Vouvray, fine white napkins—for it was not necessary to remonstrate with the dyer's wife on the color of her linen—and everything so well prepared that it was quite pleasant to him to see the dishes of fresh eels, to smell the good odor of the meats, and to admire a thousand nameless little things about the room, and la Tascherette, fresh and appetizing as an apple on a hot day. Now the mechanic, excited to excess by these warm preparations, was on the point of attacking the charms of the dyer's wife, when Master Taschereau gave a loud knock at the street door.

"Ha!" said madame, "what has happened? Put yourself in the clothes-chest, for I have been much abused respecting

you ; and if my husband finds you, he may undo you ; he is so violent in his temper."

And immediately she thrust the hunchback into the chest, and went quickly to her good husband, whom she knew well would be back from Chenonceaux to supper. Then the dyer was kissed warmly on both his eyes and on both his ears, and he caught his good wife to him and bestowed upon her two hearty smacks with his lips that sounded all over the room. Then the pair sat down to supper, talked together, and finished by going to bed ; and the mechanician heard all, though obliged to remain crumpled up, and not to cough or to make a single movement. He was in with the linen, crushed up as close as a sardine in a box, and had about as much air as he would have had at the bottom of a river ; but he had, to divert him, the music of love, the sighs of the dyer, and the little jokes of la Tascherette. At last, when he fancied his old comrade was asleep, he made an attempt to get out of the chest.

"Who is there ?" said the dyer.

"What is the matter, my little one ?" said his wife, lifting her nose above the counterpane.

"I heard a scratching," said the good man.

"We shall have rain to-morrow ; it's the cat," replied his wife.

The good husband put his head back upon the pillow, after having been gently embraced by his spouse. "There, my dear, you are a light sleeper. It's no good trying to make a proper husband of you. There, be good. Oh ! oh ! my little papa, your nightcap is on one side. There, put it on the other way, for you must look pretty even when you are asleep. There ! are you all right ?"

"Yes."

"Are you asleep ?" said she, giving him a kiss.

"Yes."

"Good."

In the morning the dyer's wife came softly and let out the mechanician, who was whiter than a ghost.

"Give me air, give me air!" said he.

And away he ran, cured of his love, but with as much hate in his heart as a pocket with a hole in it could hold of black wheat. The said hunchback left Tours and went to live in the town of Bruges, where certain merchants had sent for him to arrange the machinery for making hauberks.

During his long absence, Carandas, who had Moorish blood in his veins, since he was descended from an ancient Saracen left half-dead after the great battle which took place between the Moors and the French in the commune of Ballan (which is mentioned in the preceding tale), in which places are the Landes of Charlemagne, where nothing grows because of the cursed wretches and infidels there interred, and where the grass disagrees even with the cows—this Carandas never rose up or lay down in the foreign land without thinking of how he could give strength to his desires of vengeance; and he was dreaming always of it, and wished nothing less than the death of the fair washerwoman of Portillon, and often would cry out: "I will eat her flesh! I will cook one of her breasts, and swallow it without sauce!" It was a tremendous hate of good constitution—a cardinal hate—a hate of a wasp or old maid. It was all known hates moulded into one single hate, which boiled itself, concocted itself, and resolved itself into an elixir of wicked and diabolical sentiments, warmed at the fire of the most flaming furnaces of hell—it was, in fact, a master hate.

Now, one fine day, the said Carandas came back into Touraine with much wealth, that he brought from the country of Flanders, where he had sold his mechanical secrets. He bought a splendid house in the Rue Montfumier, which is still to be seen, and is the astonishment of the passers-by, because it has certain very queer round humps fashioned upon the stones of the wall. Carandas the hater found many nota-

ble changes at the house of his friend the dyer, for the good man had two sweet children, who, by a curious chance, presented no resemblance either to the mother or to the father. But as it is necessary that children bear a resemblance to some one, there are certain people who look for the features of their ancestors, when they are good-looking—the flatterers. So it was found by the good husband that his two boys were like one of his uncles, formerly a priest at Notre Dame de l'Egrinolles, but, according to certain jokers, these two children were the living portraits of a good-looking shaven-crown officiating in the church of Notre Dame la Riche, a celebrated parish situated between Tours and le Plessis. Now believe one thing, and inculcate it in your minds, and when in this book you shall only have gleaned, gathered, extracted, and learned this one principle of truth, look upon yourself as a lucky man—namely, that a man can never dispense with his nose, *id est*, that a man will always be snotty—that is to say, he will remain a man, and thus will continue throughout all future centuries to laugh and drink, to find himself in his shirt without feeling either better or worse there, and will have the same occupations. But these preparatory ideas are to better fix in the understanding that this two-footed soul will always accept as true those things which flatter his passions, caress his hates, or serve his amours: from this comes logic. So it was that, the first day the above-mentioned Carandas saw his old comrade's children, saw the handsome priest, saw the beautiful wife of the dyer, saw le Taschereau, all seated at the table, and saw to his detriment the best piece of lamprey given with a certain air by la Tascherette to her friend the priest, the mechanician said to himself: “My old friend is a cuckold, his wife intrigues with the little confessor, and the children have been begotten with his holy water. I'll show them that the hunchbacks have something more than other men.”

And this was true—as true as it is that Tours has always

had its feet in the Loire, like a pretty girl who bathes herself and plays with the water, making a flick-flack, by beating the waves with her fair white hands; for this town is more smiling, merry, loving, fresh, flowery, and fragrant than all the other towns of the world, which are not worthy to comb her locks or to buckle her waistband. And be sure if you go there you will find, in the centre of it, a sweet place, in which is a delicious street where every one promenades, where there is always a breeze, shade, sun, rain, and love. Ha! ha! laugh away, but go there. It is a street always new, always royal, always imperial—a patriotic street, a street with two paths, a street open at both ends, a wide street, a street so large that no one has ever cried: “Out of the way!” there. A street which does not wear out, a street which leads to the abbey of Grand Mont, and to a trench, which works very well with the bridge, and at the end of which is a fine fair ground. A street well paved, well built, well washed, as clean as a glass, populous, silent at certain times, a coquette with a sweet nightcap on in its pretty blue tiles—to be short, it is the street where I was born; it is the queen of streets, always between the earth and the sky; a street with a fountain; a street which lacks nothing to be celebrated among streets; and, in fact, it is the real street, the only street of Tours. If there are others, they are dark, muddy, narrow, and damp, and all come respectfully to salute this noble street, which commands them. Where am I? For once in this street no one cares to come out of it, so pleasant it is. But I owed this filial homage, this descriptive hymn sung from the heart, to my natal street, at the corners of which there are wanting only the brave figures of my good master, Rabelais, and of Monsieur Descartes, both unknown to the people of the country. To resume: the said Carandas was, on his return from Flanders, entertained by his comrade, and by all those by whom he was liked for his jokes, his drollery, and quaint remarks. The good hunchback appeared cured of his old

love, embraced the children, and when he was alone with the dyer's wife recalled the night in the clothes-chest and the night in the sewer to her memory, saying to her: "Ha! ha! what games you used to have with me!"

"It was your own fault," said she, laughing. "If you had allowed yourself by reason of your great love to be ridiculed, made a fool of, and bantered a few more times, you might have made an impression on me like the others." Thereupon Carandas commenced to laugh, though inwardly raging all the time. Seeing the chest where he had nearly been suffocated, his anger increased the more violently because the sweet creature had become still more beautiful, like all those who are permanently youthful from bathing in the waters of youth, which waters are naught less than the sources of love. The mechanician studied the proceedings in the way of cuckoldom at his neighbor's house, in order to revenge himself, for as many houses as there are so many varieties of manner are there in this business; and although all amours resemble each other in the same manner that all men resemble each other, it is proved to the abstracters of true things that, for the happiness of women, each love has its especial physiognomy, and if there is nothing that resembles a man so much as a man, there is also nothing differs from a man so much as a man. That it is which confuses all things or explains the thousand fantasies of women, who seek the best men with a thousand pains and a thousand pleasures, perhaps more the one than the other. But how can I blame them for their essays, changes, and contradictory aims? Why, Nature frisks and wriggles, twists and turns about, and you expect a woman to remain still! Do you know if ice is really cold? No. Well, then, neither do you know that cuckoldom is not a lucky chance, the produce of brains well furnished and better made than all others. Seek something better than ventosity beneath the sky. This will help to spread the philosophic reputation of this eccentric book. Oh, yes; go on. He who cries "vermin

powder" is more advanced than those who occupy themselves with Nature, seeing that she is a proud jade and a capricious one, and only allows herself to be seen at certain times. Do you understand? So in all languages does she belong to the feminine gender, being a thing essentially changeable and fruitful and fertile in tricks.

Now Carandas soon recognized the fact that among cuckoldoms the best understood and the most discreet is ecclesiastical cuckoldom. This is how the dyer's wife had laid her plans. She went always toward her cottage at Grenadière-les-Saint-Cyr on the eve of the Sabbath, leaving her good husband to finish his work, to count up and check his books, and to pay his workmen; then Taschereau would join her there on the morrow, and always found a good breakfast ready and his good wife gay, and always brought the priest with him. The fact is, this damnable priest crossed the Loire the night before in a small boat, in order to keep the dyer's wife warm and to calm her fancies, in order that she might sleep well during the night, a duty which young men understand very well. Then this fine curber of fantasies got back to his house in the morning by the time Taschereau came to invite him to spend the day at la Grenadière, and the cuckold always found the priest asleep in his bed. The boatman being well paid, no one knew anything of these goings on, for the lover journeyed the night before after nightfall, and on the Sunday in the early morning. Assoon as Carandas had verified the arrangement and constant practice of these gallant diversions he determined to wait for a day when the lovers would meet, hungry one for the other, after some accidental abstinence. This meeting took place very soon, and the curious hunchback saw the boatman waiting below the square, at the canal St. Antoine, for the young priest, who was handsome, blonde, slender, and well-shaped, like the gallant and cowardly hero of love, so celebrated by Monsieur Ariosto. Then the mechanician went to find the old dyer, who always loved his wife

and always believed himself the only man who had a finger in her pie.

"Ah! good-evening, old friend," said Carandas to Taschereau; and Taschereau made him a bow.

Then the mechanician relates to him all the secret festivals of love, vomits words of peculiar import, and pricks the dyer on all sides.

At length, seeing he was ready to kill both his wife and the priest, Carandas said to him: "My good neighbor, I have brought back from Flanders a poisoned sword, which will instantly kill any one, if it only makes a scratch upon him. Now, directly you shall have merely touched your wench and her paramour, they will die."

"Let us go fetch it," said the dyer.

Then the two merchants went in great haste to the house of the hunchback, to get the sword and rush off to the country.

"But shall we find them *in flagrante delicto*?" asked Taschereau.

"You will see," said the hunchback, jeering to his friend. In fact, the cuckold had not long to wait to behold the joy of the two lovers.

The sweet wench and her well-beloved were busy trying to catch, in a certain lake that you probably know, that little bird that sometimes makes his nest there, and they were laughing and trying, and still laughing.

"Ah, my darling!" said she, clasping him, as though she wished to take an outline of him on her chest: "I love thee so much I should like to eat thee! Nay, more than that, to have you in my skin, so that you might never quit me."

"I should like it too," replied the priest; "but as you can't have me altogether, you must try a little bit at a time."

It was at this moment that the husband entered, his sword unsheathed and flourished above him. The beautiful Tascherette, who knew her lord's face well, saw what would be the fate of her well-beloved, the priest. But suddenly she

sprang toward the goodman, half-naked, her hair streaming over her, beautiful with shame, but more beautiful with love, and cried to him: "Stay, unhappy man! Wouldst thou kill the father of thy children?" Thereupon the good dyer, staggered by the maternal majesty of cuckoldom, and perhaps also by the fire of his wife's eyes, let the sword fall upon the foot of the hunchback, who had followed him, and thus killed him.

This teaches us not to be spiteful.



THE THREE CLERKS OF ST. NICHOLAS.

THE Three Barbels Inn at Tours was formerly the best place in the town for sumptuous fare ; and the landlord, reputed the prince of cooks, went to prepare wedding-breakfasts as far as Chattelherault, Loches, Vendôme, and Blois. The said man, an old fox, perfect in his business, never lighted lamps in the daytime, knew how to skin a flint, charged for wool, leather, and feathers, had an eye to everything, did not easily let any one pay with chaff instead of coin, and for a penny less than his account would have affronted even a prince. For the rest, he was a good banterer, drinking and laughing with his regular customers, hat in hand always before the persons furnished with plenary indulgences entitled *Sit nomen Domini benedictum*, running them into expense, and proving to them, if need were, by sound argument, that wines were dear, and that what whatever they might think, nothing was given away in Touraine, everything had to be bought, and, at the same time, paid for. In short, if he could without disgrace have done so, he would have reckoned so much for the good air and so much for the view of the country. Thus he built up a tidy fortune with other people's money, became as round as a butt, larded with fat, and was called Monsieur. At the time of the last fair three young fellows, who were apprentices in knavery, in whom there was more of the material that makes thieves than saints, and who knew just how far it was possible to go without catching their necks in the branches of trees, made up their minds to amuse themselves, and live well, condemning certain hawkers or others in all the expenses. Now these limbs of Satan gave the slip to their masters, under whom they had been studying the art of parchment scrawling, and came

to stay at the hotel of the Three Barbels, where they demanded the best rooms, turned the place inside out, turned up their noses at everything, bespoke all the lampreys in the market, and announced themselves as first-class merchants, who never carried their goods with them, and traveled only with their persons. The host bustled about, turned the spits, got out the best of everything, and prepared a glorious repast for these three dodgers, who had already made noise enough for a hundred crowns, and who most certainly would not even have given up the copper coins which one of them was jingling in his pocket. But if they were hard up for money they did not want for ingenuity, and all three arranged to play their parts like thieves at a fair. Theirs was a farce in which there was plenty of eating and drinking, since for five days they so heartily attacked every kind of provision that a party of German soldiers would have spoiled less than they obtained by fraud. These three cunning fellows made their way to the fair after breakfast, well primed, gorged, and big in the belly, and did as they liked with the greenhorns and others, robbing, filching, playing, and losing, taking down the writings and signs and changing them, putting that of the toyman over the jeweler's and that of the jeweler outside the shoemaker's, turning the stores inside out, making the dogs fight, cutting the ropes of tethered horses, throwing cats among the crowd, crying "Stop thief!" and saying to every one they met, "Are you not Monsieur D'Entrefesse, of Angiers?" Then they hustled every one, making holes in the sacks of flour, looking for their handkerchiefs in ladies' pockets, raising their skirts, crying, looking for a lost jewel, and saying to them:

"Ladies, it has fallen into a hole!"

They directed the little children wrongly, slapped the stomachs of those who were gaping in the air, and prowled about, fleecing and annoying every one. In short, the devil would have been a gentleman in comparison with these black-guard students, who would have been hanged rather than do

an honest action ; as well have expected charity from two angry litigants. They left the fair, not fatigued but tired of ill-doing, and spent the remainder of their time over their dinner until the evening, when they recommenced their pranks by torchlight. After the peddlers they commenced operations on the ladies of the town, to whom, by a thousand dodges, they gave only that which they received, according to the axiom of Justinian : *Cuicum jus tribuere*, "To every one his own juice ;" and afterward jokingly said to the poor wenches :

"We are in the right and you in the wrong."

At last, at supper-time, having nothing else to do, they began to knock each other about, and, to keep the game alive, complained of the flies to the landlord, remonstrating with him that elsewhere the innkeepers had them caught in order that gentlemen of position might not be annoyed with them. However, toward the fifth day, which is the critical day of fevers, the host not having seen, although he kept his eyes wide open, the royal surface of a crown, and knowing that if all that glittered were gold it would be cheaper, began to knit his brows and go more slowly about that which his high-class merchants required of him. Fearing that he had made a bad bargain with them, he tried to sound the depth of their pockets ; perceiving which the three clerks ordered him, with the assurance of a provost hanging his man, to serve them quickly with a good supper, as they had to depart immediately. Their merry countenances dismissed the host's suspicions. Thinking that rogues without money would certainly look grave, he prepared a supper worthy a canon, wishing even to see them drunk, in order the more easily to clap them into gaol in the event of an accident. Not knowing how to make their escape from the room, in which they were about as much at their ease as are fish upon straw, the three companions ate and drank immoderately, looking at the situation of the windows, waiting the moment to decamp, but not getting the opportunity.

Cursing their luck, one of them wished to go and undo his vest in the garden, on account of a colic, the other to fetch a doctor to the third, who did his best to faint. The cursed landlord kept dodging about from the kitchen into the room, and from the room into the kitchen, watching the nameless ones, going a step forward to save his crowns, and going a step back to save his crown, in case they should be real gentlemen; and he acted like a brave and prudent host who likes halfpence and objects to kicks; but under pretense of properly attending to them, he always had an ear in the room and a foot in the court; fancied he was always being called by them, came every time they laughed, showing them a face with an unsettled look upon it, and always said: "Gentlemen, what is your pleasure?" This was an interrogatory in reply to which they would willingly have given him ten inches of his own spit in his stomach, because he appeared as if he knew very well what would please them at this juncture, seeing that to have twenty crowns, full weight, they would each of them have sold a third of his eternity. You can imagine they sat on their seats as if they were gridirons, that their feet itched and their posteriors were rather warm. Already the host had put the pears, the cheese, and the preserves near their noses, but they, sipping their liqueur, and picking at the dishes, looked at each other to see if either of them had found a good piece of roguery in his sack, and they all began to enjoy themselves rather wofully. The most cunning of the three clerks, who was a Burgundian, smiled and said, seeing the hour of payment arrived: "This must stand over for a week," as if they had been at the Palais de Justice. The two others, in spite of the danger, began to laugh.

"What do we owe?" asked he who had in his belt the heretofore mentioned twelve sols (sous), and he turned them about as though he would make them breed little ones by this excited movement. He was a native of Picardy, and very passionate; a man to take offense at anything in order that

he might throw the landlord out of the window in all security of conscience. Now he said these words with the air of a man of immense wealth.

"Six crowns, gentlemen," replied the host, holding out his hand.

"I cannot permit myself to be entertained by you alone, viscount," said the third student, who was from Anjou, and as artful as a woman in love.

"Neither can I," said the Burgundian.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" replied the Picardian, "you are jesting. I am yours to command."

"Sambreguoy!" cried he of Anjou. "You will not let us pay three times; our host would not suffer it."

"Well, then," said the Burgundian, "whichever of us shall tell the worst tale shall satisfy the landlord."

"Who will be the judge?" asked the Picardian, dropping his twelve sols to the bottom of his pocket.

"Pardieu! our host. He should be capable, seeing that he is a man of taste," said he of Anjou. "Come along, great chef, sit you down, drink, and lend us both your ears. The audience is open."

Thereupon the host sat down, but not until he had poured out a good gobletful of wine.

"My turn first," said the Anjou man. "Permit me; I commence.

"In our duchy of Anjou, the country people are very faithful servants to our holy Catholic religion, and none of them would lose his portion of paradise for lack of doing penance or killing a heretic. If a professor of heresy passed that way, he quickly found himself under the grass, without knowing whence his death had proceeded. A good man of Larzé, returning one night from his evening prayer to the wine-flasks of the Pomme-de-Pin (pine-apple), where he had left his understanding and memory, fell into a ditch full of water near his house, and found he was up to his neck.

One of the neighbors finding him shortly afterward, and very nearly frozen, for it was winter time, said half-jokingly to him:

“ ‘Halloo! what are you waiting for there?’ ”

“ ‘A thaw,’ said the tipsy fellow, finding himself held by the ice.

“ Then Godenot, like a good Christian, released him from his dilemma, and opened the door of the house for him, out of respect to the wine, which is lord of this country. The goodman then went and got into the bed of the maid-servant, who was a young and pretty wench. The old bungler bemuddled with wine, went ploughing into the wrong land, fancying all the time it was his wife by his side, and thanking her for the youth and freshness she still retained. On hearing her husband, the wife began to cry out, and by her horrible shrieks the man was awakened to the fact that he was not in the road to salvation, which made the poor laborer sorrowful beyond expression.

“ ‘Ah!’ said he; ‘God has punished me for not going to vespers at church.’ ”

“ And he began to excuse himself as best he could, saying that the wine had muddled his understanding, and getting into his own bed he kept repeating to his good wife, that for his best cow he would not have had this sin upon his conscience.

“ ‘My dear,’ said she, ‘go and confess the first thing to-morrow morning, and let us say no more about it.’ ”

“ The good man trotted to confessional, and related his case with all humility to the rector of the parish, who was a good old priest, capable of being up above the slipper of the holy foot.

“ ‘An error is not a sin,’ said he to the penitent. ‘You will fast to-morrow, and be absolved.’ ”

“ ‘Fast!—with pleasure,’ said the good man. ‘That does not mean go without drink.’ ”

“ ‘Oh !’ replied the rector, ‘you must drink water, and eat nothing but a quarter of a loaf and an apple.’

“ Then the good man, who had no confidence in his memory, went home, repeating to himself the penance ordered. But having loyally commenced with a quarter of a loaf and an apple, he arrived at home, saying, a quarter of apples, and a loaf.

“ Then to purify his soul, he set about accomplishing his fast, and his good woman having given him a loaf from the safe and unhooked a string of apples from the beam, he set sorrowfully to work. As he heaved a sigh on taking the last mouthful of bread, hardly knowing where to put it, for he was full to the chin, his wife remonstrated with him, that God did not desire the death of a sinner, and that for lack of putting a crust of bread in his belly, he would not be reproached for having put things in their wrong places.

“ ‘Hold your tongue, wife !’ said he. ‘If it chokes me I must fast.’

“ ‘I’ve paid my share, it’s your turn, viscount,’ added he of Anjou, giving the Picardian a knowing wink.

“ The goblets are empty. Hi, there ! More wine.”

“ Let us drink,” cried the Picardian. “ Moist stories slip out easier.”

At the same time he tossed off a glassful without leaving a drop at the bottom, and, after a preliminary little cough, he related the following :

“ You must know that the maids of Picardy, before setting up housekeeping, are accustomed honestly to gain their linen, vessels, and chests ; in short, all the needed household utensils. To accomplish this, they go into service in Peronne, Abbeville, Amiens, and other towns, where they are tirewomen, wash up glasses, clean plates, fold linen, and carry up the dinner, or anything that there is to be carried. They are all married as soon as they possess something else beside that

which they naturally bring to their husbands. These women are the best housewives, because they understand the business, and everything else thoroughly. One belonging to Azonville, which is the land of which I am lord by inheritance, having heard speak of Paris, where the people did not put themselves out of the way for any one, and where one could subsist for a whole day by passing the cooks' shops and smelling the steam, so fattening was it, took it into her head to go there. She trudged bravely along the road, and arrived with a pocket full of emptiness. There she fell in, at the Porte St. Denis, with a company of soldiers, placed there for a time as a vedette, for the Protestants had assumed a dangerous attitude. The sergeant, seeing this hooded linnet coming, stuck his headpiece on one side, straightened his feather, twisted his mustache, cleared his throat, rolled his eye, put his hands on his hips, and stopped the Picardian to see if her ears were properly pierced, since it was forbidden to girls to enter otherwise into Paris. Then he asked, by way of a joke, but with a serious face, what brought her there, he pretending to believe she had come to take the keys of Paris by assault. To which the poor innocent replied that she was in search of a good situation, and had no evil intentions, only desiring to gain something.

“‘Very well; I will employ you,’ said the wag. ‘I am from Picardy, and will get you taken in here, where you will be treated as a queen would often like to be, and you will be able to make a good thing of it.’

Then he led her to the guard-house, where he told her to sweep the floor, polish the saucepans, stir the fire, and keep a watch on everything, adding that she should have thirty sols a head for the men if their service pleased her. Now seeing that the squad was there for a month, she would be able to gain ten crowns, and at their departure would find fresh arrivals who would make good arrangements with her, and by this means she would be able to take back money and presents

to her people. The girl cleaned the room and prepared the meals so well, singing and humming, that this day the soldiers found in their den the look of a monk's refectory. Then all being well content, each of them gave a sol to their hand-maiden. Well satisfied, they put her into the bed of their commandant, who was in the town with his lady, and they petted and caressed her after the manner of philosophical soldiers, that is, soldiers partial to that which is good. She was soon comfortably ensconced between the sheets. But to avoid quarrels and strife, my noble warriors drew lots for their turn, arranged themselves in single file, playing well at Pique hardie, saying not a word, but each one taking at least twenty-six sols' worth of the girl's society. Although not accustomed to work for so many, the poor girl did her best, and by this means never closed her eyes the whole night. In the morning, seeing that the soldiers were fast asleep, she rose happy at bearing no marks of the sharp skirmish, and although slightly fatigued, managed to get across the fields into the open country with her thirty sols. On the route to Picardy, she met one of her friends, who, like herself, wished to try service in Paris, and was hurrying thither, and, seeing her, asked what sort of places they were.

"Ah ! Perrine ; do not go. You want to be made of iron, and, even if you were, it would soon be worn away," was the answer.

"Now, big-belly of Burgundy," said he, giving his neighbor a hearty slap, "spit out your story or pay !"

"By the Queen of Antlers !" replied the Burgundian, "by my faith, by the saints, by God ! and by the devil, I know only stories of the Court of Burgundy, which are only current coin in our own land."

"Eh, *ventre Dieu* ! are we not in the land of Bauffremont ?" cried the other, pointing to the empty goblets.

"I will tell you, then, an adventure well known at Dijon,

which happened at the time I was in command there, and was worth being written down. There was a sergeant of justice named Franc-Taupin, who was an old lump of mischief, always grumbling, always fighting; stiff and starchy, and never comforting those he was leading to the hulks, with little jokes by the way; and, in short, he was just the man to find lice in bald heads, and bad behavior in the Almighty. This said Taupin, spurned by every one, took unto himself a wife, and by chance he was blessed with one as mild as the peel of an onion, who, noticing the peculiar humor of her husband, took more pains to bring joy to his house than would another to bestow horns upon him. But although she was careful to obey him in all things, and to live at peace would have tried to excrete gold for him, had God permitted it, this man was always surly and crabbed, and no more spared his wife blows than does a debtor promises to the bailiff's man. This unpleasant treatment continuing in spite of the carefulness and angelic behavior of the poor woman, she being unable to accustom herself to it, was compelled to inform her relations, who thereupon came to the house. When they arrived, the husband declared to them that his wife was an idiot, that she displeased him in every possible way, and made his life almost unbearable; that she would wake him out of his first sleep, never came to the door when he knocked, but would leave him out in the rain and the cold, and that the house was always untidy. His garments were buttonless, his laces wanted tags. The linen was spoiling, the wine turning sour, the wood damp, and the bed was always creaking at unseasonable moments. In short, everything was going wrong. To this tissue of falsehoods, the wife replied by pointing to the clothes and things, all in a state of thorough repair. Then the sergeant said that he was very badly treated, that his dinner was never ready for him, or if it was, the broth was thin or the soup cold, either the wine or the glasses were forgotten, the meat was without gravy or parsley,

the mustard had turned, he either found hairs in the dish or the cloth was dirty and took away his appetite, indeed nothing did she ever get for him that was to his liking. The wife, astonished, contented herself with stoutly denying the faults imputed to her. 'Ah,' said he, "you dirty hussy! You deny it, do you! Very well then, my friends, you come and dine here to-day, you shall be witnesses of her misconduct. And if she can for once serve me properly, I will confess myself wrong in all I have stated, and will never lift my hand against her again, but will resign to her my halberd and my breeches, and give her full authority here.'

" 'Oh, well,' said she, joyfully, 'I shall then henceforth be both wife and mistress!'

"Then the husband, confident of the nature and imperfections of his wife, desired that the dinner should be served under the vine arbor, thinking he would be able to shout at her if she did not hurry quickly enough from the table to the pantry. The good housewife set to work with a will. The plates were clean enough to see one's face in, the mustard was fresh and well made, the dinner beautifully cooked, as appetizing as stolen fruit; the glasses were clear, the wine was cool, and everything so nice, so clean and white, that the repast would have done honor to a bishop's chatterbox. Just as she was standing before the table, casting that last glance which all good housewives like to give to everything, her husband knocked at the door. At that very moment a cursed hen, who had taken it into her head to get on the top of the arbor to gorge herself with grapes, let fall a large lump of dirt right in the middle of the cloth. The poor woman was half-dead with fright; so great was her despair, she could think of no other way of remedying the thoughtlessness of the fowl than by covering the unseemly patch with a plate in which she put the fine fruits taken at random from her pocket, losing sight altogether of the symmetry of the table. Then, in order that no one should notice it, she instantly fetched the

soup, seated every one in his place, and begged them to enjoy themselves.

“Now, all of them, seeing everything so well arranged, uttered exclamations of pleasure, except the diabolical husband, who remained moody and sullen, knitting his brows and looking for a straw on which to hang a quarrel with his wife. Thinking it safe to give him one for himself, her relations being present, she said to him, ‘Here’s your dinner, nice and hot, well served, the cloth is clean, the salt-cellars full, the plates clean, the wine fresh, the bread well baked. What is there lacking? What do you require? What do you desire? What else do you want?’

“‘Oh, sh-t!’ said he, in a great rage.

“The good woman instantly lifted the plate, and replied:

“‘There you are, my dear!’

“Seeing which, the sergeant was dumfounded, thinking that the devil was in league with his wife. He was immediately gravely reproached by the relations, who declared him to be in the wrong, abused him, and made more jokes at his expense than a recorder writes words in a month. From that time forward the sergeant lived comfortably and peaceably with his wife, who at the least appearance of temper on his part, would say to him:

“‘Do you want some——?’”

“Who has told the worst now?” cried the Anjou man, giving the host a tap on the shoulder.

“He has! he has!” said the two others. Then they began to dispute among themselves, like the holy fathers in council; seeking, by creating a confusion, throwing the glasses at each other, and jumping about, a lucky chance to make a run of it.

“I’ll settle the question,” cried the host, seeing that whereas they had all three been ready with their own accounts, not one of them was thinking of his.

They stopped terrified.

"I will tell you a better one than all, then you will have to give me ten sols a head."

"Silence for the landlord," said the one from Anjou.

"In our suburb of Notre-Dame la Riche, in which this tavern is situated, there lived a beautiful girl, who, beside her natural advantages, had a good round sum in her keeping. Therefore, as soon as she was old enough, and strong enough to bear the matrimonial yoke, she had as many lovers as there are sols in St. Gatien's money-box on Easter day. This girl chose one who, saving your presence, was as good a worker, night and day, as any two monks together. They were soon betrothed, and the marriage was arranged; but the joy of the first night did not draw near without occasioning some slight apprehensions to the lady, as she was liable, through an infirmity, to expel vapors, which came out like bombshells. Now, fearing that when thinking of something else, during the first night, she might give the reins to her eccentricities, she stated the case to her mother, whose assistance she invoked. The good lady informed her that this faculty of engendering wind was inherent in the family; that in her time she had been greatly embarrassed by it, but only in the earlier period of her life. God had been kind to her, and, since the age of seven, she had evaporated nothing except on the last occasion, when she had bestowed upon her dead husband a farewell blow. 'But,' said she to her daughter, 'I have a sure specific, left to me by my mother, which brings these surplus explosions to nothing, and exhales them noiselessly. By this means these sighs become odorless, noiseless, and scandal is avoided.'

"The girl, much pleased, learned how to sail close to the wind, thanked her mother, and danced away merrily, storing up her flatulence like an organ-blower waiting the first note of mass. Entering the nuptial chamber, she determined to expel it when getting into bed, but the fantastic element was beyond control. The husband came; I leave you to im-

agine how love's conflict sped. In the middle of the night the bride arose under a false pretext, and quickly returned again; but when climbing into her place, the pent-up force went off with such a loud discharge that you would have thought with me that the curtains were split.

"'Ha! I've missed my aim!' said she.

"'Sdeath, my dear,' I replied, 'then spare your powder. You would earn a good living in the army with that artillery.'

"It was my wife."

"Ha! ha! ha!" went the clerks.

And they roared with laughter, holding their sides and complimenting their host.

"Did you ever hear a better story, viscount?"

"Ah, what a story!"

"That is a story?"

"A master story!"

"The king of stories!"

"Ha! ha! It beats all the other stories hollow. After that I say there are no stories like the stories of our host."

"By the faith of a Christian, I never heard a better story in my life."

"Why, I can hear the report."

"I should like to kiss the orchestra."

"Ah, gentlemen," said the Burgundian, gravely, "we cannot leave without seeing the hostess, and if we do not ask to kiss this famous wind-instrument, it is out of respect for so good a story-teller."

Thereupon they all exalted the host, his story, and his wife's trumpet so well that the old fellow, believing in these knaves' laughter and pompous eulogies, called to his wife. But she not coming, the clerks said, not without frustrative intention: "Let us go to her."

Thereupon they all went out of the room. The host took

the candle and went upstairs first, to light them and show them the way ; but seeing the street door ajar, the rascals took to their heels, and were off like shadows, leaving the host to take in settlement of his account another of his wife's offerings.



THE CONTINENCE OF KING FRANCIS THE FIRST.

EVERY one knows through what adventure King Francis, the first of that name, was taken like a silly bird and led into the town of Madrid, in Spain. There the Emperor Charles V. kept him carefully locked up, like an article of great value, in one of his castles, in which our defunct Sire, of immortal memory, soon became listless and weary, seeing that he loved the open air and his little comforts, and no more understood being shut up in a cage than a cat would folding up lace. He fell into moods of such strange melancholy that his letters having been read in full council, Madame d'Angoulême, his mother, Madame Catherine, the Dauphine, Monsieur de Montmorency, and those who were at the head of affairs in France, knowing the great lechery of the King, determined, after mature deliberation, to send Queen Marguerite to him, from whom he would doubtless receive alleviation of his sufferings, that good lady being much loved by him, and merry, and learned in all necessary wisdom. But she, alleging that it would be dangerous for her soul, because it was impossible for her, without great danger, to be alone with the King in his cell, a sharp secretary, the *Sieur de Fizes*, was sent to the Court of Rome, with orders to beg of the pontiff a papal brief of special indulgences, containing proper absolutions for the petty sins which, looking at their consanguinity, the said Queen might commit with a view to curing the King's melancholy.

At this time Adrian VI., the Dutchman, still wore the tiara, who, a good fellow, for the rest did not forget, in spite of the scholastic ties which united him to the Emperor, that the eldest son of the Catholic church was concerned in the affair, and was good enough to send to Spain an express legate.

furnished with full powers, to attempt the salvation of the Queen's soul and the King's body, without prejudice to God. This most urgent affair made the gentlemen very uneasy, and caused an itching in the feet of the ladies, who, from great devotion to the crown, would all have offered to go to Madrid, but for the dark distrust of Charles the Fifth, who would not grant the King permission to see any of his subjects, nor even the members of his family. It was therefore necessary to negotiate the departure of the Queen of Navarre. Then, nothing else was spoken about but this deplorable abstinence, and the lack of amorous exercise so vexatious to a prince who was so much accustomed to it. In short, from one thing to another, the women finished by thinking more of the King's condition than of the King himself. The Queen was the first to say that she wished she had wings. To this Monseigneur Odet de Châtillon replied that she had no need of them to be an angel. One, that was Madame l'Amirale, blamed God that it was not possible to send by a messenger that which the poor King so much required; and every one of the ladies would have lent it in her turn.

"God has done very well to fix it," said the Dauphine, quietly; "for our husbands would leave us rather badly off during their absence."

So much was said and so much thought upon the subject, that at her departure the Queen of all Marguerites was charged, by these good Christians, to kiss the captive heartily for all the ladies of the realm; and if it had been permissible to prepare pleasure like mustard, the Queen would have been laden with enough to sell to the two Castiles.

While Madame Marguerite was, in spite of the snow, crossing the mountains, by relays of mules, hurrying on to these consolations as to a fire, the King found himself harder pressed by unsatisfied desire than he ever had been before, or would be again. In this reverberation of nature, he opened his heart to the Emperor Charles, in order that he might be

provided with a merciful specific, urging upon him that it would be an everlasting disgrace to one King to let another die for lack of gallantry. The Castilian showed himself to be a generous man. Thinking that he would be able to recuperate himself for the favor granted, out of his guest's ransom, he hinted quietly to the people commissioned to guard the prisoner that they might gratify him in this respect. Thereupon, a certain Don Hios de Lara y Lopez Barra di Ponto, a poor captain, whose pockets were empty in spite of his genealogy, and who had been for some time thinking of seeking his fortune at the Court of France, fancied that, by procuring his majesty a soft cataplasm of warm flesh, he would open for himself an honestly fertile door; and, indeed, those who know the character of the good King and his Court can decide if he deceived himself.

When the above-mentioned captain came in his turn into the chamber of the French King, he asked him respectfully if it was his good pleasure to permit him an interrogation on a subject concerning which he was as curious as about papal indulgences? To which the prince, casting aside his hypochondriacal demeanor, and twisting round on the chair in which he was seated, gave a sign of consent. The captain begged him not to be offended at the license of his language, and confessed to him that he, the King, was said to be one of the most amorous men in France, and he would be glad to learn from him if the ladies of his Court were expert in the science of love. The poor King, calling to mind his many adventures, gave vent to a deep-drawn sigh, and exclaimed that no woman of any country, including those of the moon, knew better than the ladies of France the secrets of this alchemy; and at the remembrance of the savory, gracious, and vigorous fondling of one alone, he felt himself the man, were she then within his reach, to clasp her to his heart, even on a rotten plank a hundred feet above a precipice.

Saying which, this good King, a ribald fellow, if ever

there was one, shot forth so fiercely life and light from his eyes, that the captain, although a brave man, felt a quaking in his inside, so fiercely flamed the sacred majesty of royal love. But recovering his courage he began to defend the Spanish ladies, declaring that in Castile alone was love properly understood, because it was the most religious place in Christendom, and the more fear the women had of damning themselves by yielding to a lover, the more their souls were in the affair, because they knew they must take their pleasure then against eternity. He further added that, if the Lord King would wager one of the best and most profitable manors in the kingdom of France, he would give him a Spanish night of love, in which a casual quean should, unless he took care, draw his soul from his body.

“Done,” said the King, jumping up from his chair. “I will give thee, by God, the manor of Ville-aux-Dames in my province of Touraine, with full privilege of chase, of high and low jurisdiction.”

Then the captain, who was acquainted with the lady of the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, requested her to smother the King of France with kindness, and demonstrate to him the great advantage of the Castilian imagination over the simple movement of the French. To which the Marchesa of Amaesguy consented for the honor of Spain, and also for the pleasure of knowing of what paste God made kings, a matter in which she was ignorant, having experience only of the princes of the church. Thus she came passionate as a lion that has broken out of his cage, and made the bones of the King crack, in a manner that would have killed any other man. But the above-named King was so well furnished, so greedy, and so well bitten, that he no longer felt a bite; and from this terrible duel the marchesa emerged abashed, believing that she had had the devil to confess.

The captain, confident in his agent, came to salute his lord, thinking to do homage for his fief. Thereupon the King said

to him, in a jocular manner, that the Spanish ladies were of a passable temperature, and their system a fair one, but that when gentleness was required they substituted frenzy; that he kept fancying each thrill was a sneeze or a case of violence; in short, that the embrace of a Frenchwoman brough back the drinker more thirsty than ever, tiring him never; and that, with the ladies of his Court, love was a gentle pleasure without parallel, and not the labor of a master-baker in his kneading-trough.

The poor captain was strangely piqued at this language. In spite of the nice sense of honor which the King pretended to possess, he fancied that his majesty wished to bilk him like a student stealing a slice of love at a brothel in Paris. Nevertheless, not knowing for the matter of that, if the marchesa had not over-spanished the King, he demanded his revenge from the captive, pledging him his word that he should have for certain a veritable fay, and that he would yet gain the fief. The King was too courteous and gallant a knight to refuse this request, and even made a pretty and right royal speech, intimating his desire to lose the wager. Then, after vespers, the guard passed fresh and warm into the King's chamber a lady most dazzlingly white—most delicately wanton, with long tresses and velvet hands, filling out her dress at the least movement, for she was gracefully plump, with a laughing mouth, and eyes moist in advance; a woman to beautify hell, and whose first word had such cordial power, that the King's garment was cracked by it. On the morrow, after the fair one had slipped out after the King's breakfast, the good captain came radiant and triumphant into the chamber.

At sight of him the prisoner exclaimed:

"Baron de la Ville-aux-Dames! God grant you joys like to mine! I like my jail! By'r lady, I will not judge between the love of our lands, but pay the wager."

"I was sure of it," said the captain.

“How so?” said the King.

“Sire, it was my wife.”

This was the origin of Larray de la Ville-aux Dames in our country, since, from corruption of the names, that of Lara-y Lopez, finished by becoming Larray. It was a good family, delighting in serving the Kings of France, and it multiplied exceedingly. Soon after, the Queen of Navarre came in due course to the King, who, weary of Spanish customs, wished to disport himself after the fashion of France; but the remainder is not the subject of this narrative. I reserve to myself the right to relate elsewhere how the legate managed to sponge the sin of the thing off the great slate, and the delicate remark of our Queen of Marguerites, who merits a saint's niche in this collection; she who first concocted such good stories. The morality of this one is easy to understand.

In the first place, Kings should never let themselves be taken in battle any more than their archetype in the game of the Grecian chief Palamedes. But from this, it appears the captivity of its King is a most calamitous and horrible evil to fall upon the populace. If it had been a queen, or even a princess, what a worse fate? But I believe the thing could not happen again, except with cannibals. Can there ever be a reason for imprisoning the flower of the realm? I think too well of Ashtaroth, Lucifer, and others, to imagine that, did they reign, they would hide the joy of all the beneficent light, at which poor sufferers warm themselves. And it was necessary that the worst of devils, *id est*, a wicked old heretic woman, should find herself upon a throne, to keep a prisoner sweet Mary of Scotland, to the shame of all the knights of Christendom, who should have come without previous assignation to the foot of Fotheringay, and have left thereof no single stone.

THE MERRY TATTLE OF THE NUNS OF POISSY.

THE abbey of Poissy has been rendered famous by old authors as a place of pleasure, where the misconduct of the nuns first began, and whence proceeded so many good stories calculated to make laymen laugh at the expense of our holy religion. The said abbey by this means became fertile in proverbs, which none of the clever folks of our day understand, although they sift and chew them in order to digest them.

If you ask one of them what the *olives of Poissy* are, they will answer you gravely that it is a periphrase relating to truffles, and that *the way to serve them*, of which one formerly spoke, when joking with these virtuous maidens, meant a peculiar kind of sauce. That's the way these scribblers hit on truth once in a hundred times. To return to these good recluses, it was said—by way of a joke, of course—that they preferred finding a harlot in their chemises to a good woman. Certain other jokers reproached them with imitating the lives of the saints, in their own fashion, and said that all they admired in Mary of Egypt was her fashion of paying the boatman. From whence the raillery: *To honor the saints after the fashion of Poissy*. There is still the *crucifix of Poissy*, which kept the stomach warm; and *the matins of Poissy*, which concluded with a little chorister. Finally, of a hearty jade, well acquainted with the ways of love, it was said—*She is a nun of Poissy*. That property of a man which he can only lend was *The key of the Abbey of Poissy*. What the *gate* of the said abbey was can easily be guessed. This gate, door, wicket, opening, or road was always half open, was easier to open than to shut, and cost much in repairs. In short, at that period, there was no fresh device in love invented that had not its

origin in the good convent of Poissy. You may be sure there is a good deal of untruth and hyperbolical emphasis in these proverbs, jests, jokes, and idle tales. The nuns of the said Poissy were good young ladies, who now this way, now that, cheated God to the profit of the devil, as many others did, which was but natural, because our nature is weak; and although they were nuns, they had their little imperfections. They found themselves barren in a certain particular, hence the evil. But the truth of the matter is, all these wickednesses were the deeds of an abbess who had fourteen children, all born alive, since they had been perfected at leisure. The fantastic amours and the wild conduct of this woman, who was of royal blood, caused the convent of Poissy to become fashionable; and thereafter no pleasant adventure happened in the abbeys of France which was not credited to these poor girls, who would have been well satisfied with a tenth of them. Then the abbey was reformed, and these holy sisters were deprived of the little happiness and liberty which they had enjoyed. In an old cartulary of the abbey of Turpenay, near Chinon, which in these later troublous times had found a resting-place in the library of Azay, where the custodian was only too glad to receive it, I met with a fragment under the head of "The Hours of Poissy," which had evidently been put together by a merry abbot of Turpenay for the diversion of his neighbors of Ussé, Azay, Mongaugar, Sacchez, and other places of this province. I give them under the authority of the clerical garb, but altered to my own style, because I have been compelled to turn them from Latin into French. I commence:—At Poissy the nuns were accustomed, when Mademoiselle, the King's daughter, the abbess, had gone to bed. By-the-by, it was she who first called it *faire la petite oie* (do the little goose), to stick to the preliminaries of love, the prologues, prefaces, protocols, warnings, notices, introductions, summaries, prospectuses, arguments, notes, epigraphs, titles, bastard titles, current titles, scholia, marginal remarks,

frontispieces, observations, gilt edges, book-marks, reglets, vignettes, tail-pieces and engravings, without once opening the merry book to read, re-read, and study to apprehend and comprehend the contents. And she gathered together in a body all these extra-judicial little pleasures of that sweet language, which comes indeed from the lips, yet makes no noise, and practiced them so well, that she died a virgin and perfect in shape. This gay science was afterward deeply studied by the ladies of the Court, who took lovers for *la petite oie* (their little goose), others for honor, and at times also certain ones who had over them the right of high and low jurisdiction, and were masters of everything—a state of things much preferred. But to continue: When this virtuous princess was naked and shameless between the sheets, the said girls (those whose cheeks were unwrinkled and their hearts gay) would steal noiselessly out of their cells and hide themselves in that of one of the sisters who was much liked by all of them. There they would have cosy little chats, enlivened with sweet-meats, pastry, liqueurs, and girlish quarrels, worry their elders, imitating them grotesquely, innocently mocking them, telling stories that made them laugh till the tears came, and playing a thousand pranks. At times they would measure their feet to see whose were smallest, compare the white plumpness of their arms, see whose nose had the infirmity of blushing after supper, count their freckles, tell each other where their skin-marks were situated, dispute whose complexion was the clearest, whose hair the prettiest color, and whose figure the best. You can imagine that among these figures sanctified to God there were fine ones, stout ones, lank ones, thin ones, plump ones, supple ones, shrunkened ones, and figures of all kinds. Then they would quarrel among themselves as to who took the least stuff to make a girdle, and she who spanned the least was pleased without knowing why. At times they would relate their dreams, and what they had seen in them. Often one or two, at times all of them, had

dreamed they had tight hold of the keys of the abbey. Then they would consult each other about their little ailments. One had scratched her finger, another had a whitlow; this one had risen in the morning with the white of her eye blood-shot, that one had put her finger out telling her beads. All had some little thing the matter with them.

"Ah! you have lied to our mother; your nails are marked with white," said one to her neighbor.

"You stopped a long time at confession this morning, sister," said another. "You must have had a good many little sins to confess."

As there is nothing resembles a pussy-cat so much as a tom-cat, they would swear eternal friendship, quarrel, sulk, dispute, and make it up again; would be jealous, laugh and pinch, pinch and laugh, and play tricks upon the novices.

At times they would say: "Suppose a gendarme came here one rainy day, where should we put him?"

"With Sister Ovide; her cell is so big he could get into it with his helmet on."

"What do you mean?" cried Sister Ovide, "are not all our cells alike?"

Thereupon my girls burst out laughing like ripe figs. One evening they increased their council by a little novice, about seventeen years of age, who appeared innocent as a new-born babe, and who would have been given the host without confession. This maiden's mouth had long watered for these secret confabulations, little feasts and rejoicings by which the young nuns softened the holy captivity of their bodies, and had wept at not being admitted to them.

"Well," said Sister Ovide to her, "have you had a good night's rest, little one?"

"Oh, no!" said she, "I have been bitten by fleas."

"Ha! you have fleas in your cell? But you must get rid of them at once. Do you know how the rules of our order enjoin them to be driven out, so that never again during

her conventual life shall a sister see so much as the tail of one?"

"No," replied the novice.

"Well, then, I will teach you. Do you see any fleas here? Do you notice any trace of fleas? Do you smell an odor of fleas? Is there any appearance of fleas in my cell? Look!"

"I can't find any," replied the little novice, who was Mademoiselle de Fiennes, "and smell no other odor than our own."

"Do as I am about to tell you, and be no more bitten. Directly you feel yourself pricked, you must strip yourself, lift your chemise, and be careful not to sin while looking all over your body; think only of the cursed flea, looking for it in good faith, without paying any attention to other things; trying only to catch the flea, which is a difficult job, as you may easily be deceived by the little black spots on your skin, which you were born with. Have you any, little one?"

"Yes," cried she. "I have two dark freckles, one on my shoulder and one on my back, rather low down, but it is hidden in a fold of the flesh."

"How did you see it?" asked Sister Perpétue.

"I did not know it. It was Monsieur de Montresor who found it out."

"Ha! ha!" said the sister, "is that all he saw?"

"He saw everything," said she; "I was quite little; he was about nine years old, and we were playing together."

The nuns hardly being able to restrain their laughter, Sister Ovide went on—

"The above-mentioned flea will jump from your legs to your eyes, will try and hide himself in apertures and crevices, will leap from valley to mountain, endeavoring to escape you; but the rules of the house order you courageously to pursue, repeating *aves*. Ordinarily at the third *ave* the beast is taken."

“The flea?” asked the novice.

“Certainly, the flea,” replied Sister Ovide; “but in order to avoid the dangers of this chase, you must be careful, in whatever spot you put your finger on the beast, to touch nothing else. Then, without regarding its cries, complaints, groans, efforts, and writhings, and the rebellion which frequently it attempts, you will press it under your thumb or other finger of the hand engaged in holding it, and with the other hand you will search for a veil to bind this flea’s eyes and prevent it from leaping, as the beast, seeing no longer clearly, will not know where to go. Nevertheless, as it will still be able to bite you, and will be getting terribly enraged, you must gently open its mouth and delicately insert therein a twig of the blessed brush that hangs over your pillow. Thus the beast will be compelled to behave properly. But, remember, that the discipline of our order allows you to retain no property, and the beast cannot belong to you. You must take into consideration that it is one of God’s creatures, and strive to render it more agreeable. Therefore, before all things, it is necessary to verify three serious things, viz., if the flea be a male, if it be a female, or if it be a virgin; supposing it to be a virgin, which is extremely rare, since these beasts have no morals, are all wild hussies, and yield to the first seducer who comes, you will seize her hinder feet, and drawing them under her little caparison you must bind them with one of her hairs, and carry it to the superior, who will decide upon its fate after having consulted the chapter.

“If it be a male——”

“How can one tell that a flea is a virgin?”* asked the curious novice.

“First of all,” replied Sister Ovide, “she is sad and melancholy, does not laugh like the others, does not bite so

* “A quoy peut-on veoir qu’une puce est pucelle?” demanda la curieuse novice.

sharp, has her mouth less wide open, and blushes when touched—you know where."

"In that case," replied the novice, "I have been bitten by a male."

At this the sisters burst out laughing so heartily that one of them sounded a bass note and voided a little water; and Sister Ovide, pointing to it on the floor, said:

"You see there's never wind without rain."

The novice laughed herself, thinking that these chuckles were caused by the sister's exclamation.

"Now," went on Sister Ovide, "if it be a male flea, you take your scissors, or your lover's dagger, if by chance he has given you one as a souvenir, previous to your entry into the convent. In short, furnished with a cutting instrument, you carefully slit open the flanks of the flea. Expect to hear him howl, cough, spit, beg your pardon; to see him twist about, sweat, make sheep's eyes, and anything that may come into his head to put off this operation. But be not astonished; pluck up your courage, by thinking that you are acting thus to bring a perverted creature into the way of salvation. Then you will dexterously take the reins, the liver, the heart, the gizzard, and noble parts, and dip them all several times into the holy water, washing and purifying them there, at the same time imploring the Holy Ghost to sanctify the interior of the beast. Afterward you will replace all these intestinal things in the body of the flea, who will be anxious to get them back again. Being by this means baptized, the soul of the creature has become Catholic. Immediately you will get a needle and thread and sew up the belly of the flea with great care, with such regard and attention as is due to a fellow-Christian; you will even pray for it—a kindness to which you will see it is sensible by its genuflexions and the attentive glances which it will bestow upon you. In short, it will cry no more, and have no further desire to kill you; and fleas are often encountered who die from pleasure at being thus converted to our

holy religion. You will do the same to all you can catch ; and the others perceiving it, after staring at the convert, will go away, so perverse are they, and so terrified at the idea of becoming Christians."

"And they are, therefore, wicked," said the novice. "Is there any greater happiness than to be in the bosom of the church?"

"Certainly," answered Sister Ursula, "here we are sheltered from the dangers of the world and of love, in which there are so many."

"Is there any other danger than that of having a child at an unseasonable time?" asked a young sister.

"During the present reign," replied Ursula, raising her head, "love has inherited leprosy, St. Anthony's fire, the Ardennes sickness, and the red rash, and has heaped up all the fevers, agonies, drugs, and sufferings of the lot in his pretty mortar, to draw out therefrom a terrible complaint, of which the devil has given the receipt, luckily for convents, because there are a great number of frightened ladies who become virtuous for fear of this love."

Thereupon they all huddled up close together, alarmed at these words, but wishing to know more.

"And is it enough to love, to suffer?" asked a sister.

"Oh, yes!" cried Sister Ovide.

"You love just for one little once a pretty gentleman," replied Ursula, "and you have the chance of seeing your teeth go one by one, your hair fall off, your cheeks grow pallid, and your eyebrows drop, and the disappearance of your prized charms will cost you many a sigh. There are poor women who have scabs come upon their noses, and others who have a horrid animal with a hundred claws, which gnaws their tenderest parts. The pope has at last been compelled to excommunicate this kind of love."

"Ah! how lucky I am to have had nothing of that sort," cried the novice.

Hearing this souvenir of love, the sisters suspected that the little one had gone astray through the heat of a *crucifix of Poissy*, and had been joking with the Sister Ovide, and drawing her out. All congratulated themselves on having so merry a jade in their company, and asked her to what adventure they were indebted for that pleasure.

"Ah!" said she, "I let myself be bitten by a big flea, who had not been baptized."

At this speech, the sister of the bass note could not restrain a second sigh.

"Ah!" said Sister Ovide, "you are bound to give us the third. If you spoke that language in the choir, the abbess would diet you like Sister Petronille; so put a sordine [a stopper for a pipe] in your trumpet."

"Is it true that you knew in her lifetime that Sister Petronille, on whom God bestowed the gift of only going twice a year to the bank of deposit?" asked Sister Ursula.

"Yes," replied Ovide. "And one evening it happened she had to remain enthroned until matins, saying: 'I am here by the will of God.' But at the first verse she was delivered, in order that she should not miss the office. Nevertheless, the late abbess would not allow that this was an especial favor, granted from on high, and said that God did not look so low. Here are the facts of the case: Our defunct sister, whose canonization the order is now endeavoring to obtain at the court of the pope, and would have had it if they could have paid the proper costs of the papal brief; this Petronille, then, had an ambition to have her name included in the Calendar of Saints, which was in no way prejudicial to our order. She lived in prayer alone, would remain in ecstasy before the altar of the Virgin, which is on the side of the fields, and pretend so distinctly to hear the angels flying in Paradise that she was able to hum the tunes they were singing. You all know that she took from them the chant of *Adoremus*, of which no man could have invented a note. She remained

for days with her eye fixed like a star, fasting, and putting no more nourishment into her body than I could into my eye. She had made a vow never to taste meat, either cooked or raw, and ate only a crust of bread a day ; but on great feast days she would add thereto a morsel of salt fish, without any sauce. On this diet she became dreadfully thin, yellow as saffron, and dry as an old bone in a cemetery ; for she was of an ardent disposition, and any one who had the happiness of knocking up against her would have drawn fire as from a flint. However, little as she ate, she could not escape an infirmity to which, luckily or unluckily, we are all more or less subject. If it were otherwise, we should be very much embarrassed. The affair in question is the obligation of expelling after eating, like all the animals, matter more or less agreeable, according to constitution. Now Sister Petronille differed from all others, because she expelled matter such as is left by a deer, and these are the hardest substances that any gizzard produces, as you must know, if you have ever put your foot upon them in the forest glade, and from their hardness they are called bullets, in the language of forestry. This peculiarity of Sister Petronille's was not unnatural, since long fasts kept her temperament at a permanent heat. According to the old sisters, her nature was so burning that, when water touched her, she went *frist ?* like a hot coal. There are sisters who have accused her of secretly cooking eggs, in the night, between her toes, in order to support her austerities. But these were scandals, invented to tarnish this great sanctity of which all the other nunneries were jealous. Our sister was piloted in the way of salvation and divine perfection by the Abbot of St. Germain-des-Près de Paris—a holy man, who always finished his injunctions with a last one, which was to offer to God all our troubles, and submit ourselves to His will, since nothing happened without His express commandment. This doctrine, which appears wise at first sight, has furnished matter for great controver-

sies, and has been finally condemned on the statement of the Cardinal of Chatillon, who declared that then there would be no such thing as sin, which would considerably diminish the revenues of the church. But Sister Petronille lived imbued with this feeling, without knowing the danger of it. After Lent, and the feasts of the great jubilee, for the first time for eight months she had need to go to the little room, and to it she went. There bravely lifting her dress, she put herself into position to do that which we poor sinners do rather oftener. But Sister Petronille could only manage to expectorate the commencement of the thing, which kept her puffing without the remainder making up its mind to follow. In spite of every effort, pursing of lips and squeezings of body, her guest preferred to remain in her blessed *corpus*, merely putting his head out of the window, like a frog taking the air, and felt no inclination to fall into the vale of misery among the others, alleging that he would not there be in the odor of sanctity. And his idea was a good one for a sample lump of dirt like myself. The good saint having used all methods of coercion, having overstretched her muscles, and tried the nerves of her thin face till they bulged out, recognized the fact that no suffering in the world was so great; and her anguish attaining the apogee of sphincterial terrors, she exclaimed: 'Oh! my God, to Thee I offer it!' At this orison, the stony matter broke off short, and fell like a flint against the walls of the privy, making a *croc, croc, crooc, paf!* You can easily understand, my sisters, that she had no need of a *torch-cul*,* and drew back the remainder."

"Then did she see angels?" asked one.

"Have they a behind?" asked another.

"Certainly not," said Ursula. "Do you not know that one general meeting-day, God having ordered them to be seated, they answered Him that they had not the where-withal?"

* Double pun on corkscrew and toilet-paper.

Thereupon they went off to bed, some alone, others nearly alone. They were good girls, who harmed only themselves.

I cannot leave them without relating an adventure which took place in their house, when Reform was passing a sponge over it, and making them all saints, as before stated. At that time there was in the episcopal chair of Paris a veritable saint, who did not brag about what he did, and cared for naught but the poor and suffering, whom the dear old bishop lodged in his heart, neglecting his own interests for theirs, and seeking out misery in order that he might heal it with words, with help, with attentions, and with money, according to the case: as ready to solace the rich in their misfortunes as the poor, patching up their souls and bringing them back to God; and tearing about hither and thither, watching his flock, the dear shepherd! Now the good man went about careless of the state of his cassocks, mantles, and breeches, so that the naked members of his church were covered. He was so charitable that he would have pawned himself to save an infidel from distress. His servants were obliged to look after him carefully. Ofttimes he would scold them when they changed unasked his tattered vestments for new; and he used to have them darned and patched, as long as they would hold together. Now this good archbishop knew that the late *Sieur de Poissy* had left a daughter, without a sou or a rag, after having eaten, drunk, and gambled away her inheritance. This poor young lady lived in a hovel, without fire in winter or cherries in spring, and did needlework, not wishing either to marry beneath herself or sell her virtue. Awaiting the time when he should be able to find a young husband for her, the prelate took it into his head to send her the outside case of one to mend, in the person of his old breeches, a task which the young lady, in her present position, would be glad to undertake. One day that the archbishop was thinking to himself that he must go the convent of *Poissy*, to see after the reformed inmates, he gave to one of his servants the oldest

of his nether garments, which was sorely in need of stitches, saying: "Take this, Saintot, to the young ladies of Poissy," meaning to say, "the young lady of Poissy." Thinking of affairs connected with the cloister, he did not inform his varlet of the situation of the lady's house; her desperate condition having been by him discreetly kept a secret. Saintot took the breeches and went his way toward Poissy, gay as a grasshopper, stopping to chat with friends he met on the way, slaking his thirst at the wayside inns, and showing many things to the breeches during their journey that might hereafter be useful to them. At last he arrived at the convent, and informed the abbess that his master had sent him to give her these articles. Then the varlet departed, leaving with the reverend mother the garment accustomed to model in relief the archiepiscopal proportions of the continent nature of the good man, according to the fashion of the period, beside the image of those things of which the Eternal Father has deprived His angels, and which in the good prelate did not want for amplitude. Madame the abbess having informed the sisters of the precious message of the good archbishop, they came in haste, curious and hustling, as ants into whose republic a chestnut husk has fallen. When they undid the breeches, which gaped horribly, they shrieked out, covering their eyes with one hand, in great fear of seeing the devil come out, the abbess exclaiming: "Hide yourselves, my daughters! This is the abode of mortal sin!"

The mother of the novices, giving a little look between her fingers, revived the courage of the holy troop, swearing by an *ave* that no living head was domiciled in the breeches. Then they all blushed at their ease, while examining this Habitavit, thinking that perhaps the desire of the prelate was that they should discover therein some sage admonition or evangelical parable. Although this sight caused certain ravages in the hearts of these most virtuous maidens, they paid little attention to the fluttering of their reins, but sprinkling a little holy

water in the bottom of the abyss, one touched it, another passed her finger through a hole, and grew bolder after looking at it. It has been pretended that, their first stir over, the abbess found a voice sufficiently firm to say: "What is there at the bottom of this? With what idea has our father sent us that which consummates the ruin of women?"

"It's fifteen years, dear mother, since I have been permitted to gaze upon the demon's den."

"Silence my daughter. You prevent me thinking what is best to be done."

Then so much were these archiepiscopal breeches turned and twisted about, admired and re-admired, pulled here, pulled there, and turned inside out—so much were they talked about, fought about, thought about, dreamed about, night and day, that on the morrow a little sister said, after having sung the matins, to which the convent had a verse and two responses—"Sisters, I have found out the parable of the archbishop. He has sent us as a mortification his garments to mend, as a holy warning to avoid idleness, the mother abbess of all the vices."

Thereupon there was a scramble to get hold of the breeches; but the abbess, using her high authority, reserved to herself the meditation over this patchwork. She was occupied during ten days, praying, and sewing the said breeches, lining them with silk, and making double hems, well sewn, and in all humility. Then the chapter being assembled, it was arranged that the convent should testify by a pretty souvenir to the said archbishop their delight that he thought of his daughters in God. Then all of them, to the very youngest, had to do some work on these blessed breeches, in order to do honor to the virtue of the good man.

Meanwhile, the prelate had had so much to attend to that he had forgotten all about his garment. This is how it came about: He made the acquaintance of a noble of the Court, who, having lost his wife—a she-fiend and sterile—said to the

good priest that he had a great ambition to meet with a virtuous woman, confiding in God, with whom he was not likely to quarrel, and was likely to have pretty children. Such a one he desired to hold by the hand, and have confidence in. Then the holy man drew such a picture of Mademoiselle de Poissy that this fair one soon became Madame de Genoilhac. The wedding was celebrated at the archiepiscopal palace, where was a feast of the first quality, and a table bordered with ladies of the highest lineage and the fashionable world of the Court, among whom the bride appeared the most beautiful, since it was certain that she was a virgin, the archbishop guaranteeing her virtue.

When the fruits, conserves, and pastry were, with many ornaments, arranged on the cloth, Saintot said to the archbishop: "Monseigneur, your well-beloved daughters of Poissy send you a fine dish for the centre."

"Put it there," said the good man, gazing with admiration at an edifice of velvet and satin, embroidered with wire ribbon, in the shape of an ancient vase, the lid of which exhaled a thousand superfine odors.

Immediately the bride, uncovering it, found therein sweetmeats, cakes, and those delicious confections to which the ladies are so partial. But one of them—some curious devotee—seeing a little piece of silk, pulled it toward her, and exposed to view the habitation of the human compass, to the great confusion of the prelate, for laughter rang round the table like a discharge of artillery.

"Well have they made the centre-dish," said the bridegroom. "These young ladies are of good understanding. Therein are all the sweets of matrimony."

Can there be any better moral than that deduced by Monsieur de Genoilhac? Then no other is needed.

THE FALSE COURTESAN.

THAT which certain people do not know is the truth concerning the decease of the Duke of Orleans, brother of King Charles VI., a death which proceeded from a great number of causes, one of which will be the subject of this narrative. This prince was for certain the most lecherous of all the royal race of Monseigneur St. Louis (who was in his lifetime King of France), without even putting on one side some of the most debauched of this fine family, which was so concordant with the vices and special qualities of our brave and pleasure-seeking nation, that you could more easily imagine hell without Satan than France without her valorous, glorious, and jovial kings. So you can laugh as loudly at those muckworms of philosophy who go about saying: "Our fathers were better," as at the good, philanthropical old bunglers who pretend that mankind is on the right road to perfection. These are old blind bats, who observe neither the plumage of oysters nor the shells of birds, which change no more than do our ways. Hip, hip, huzzah then! make merry while you're young. Keep your throats wet and your eyes dry, since a hundred-weight of melancholy is worth less than an ounce of jollity. The wrong-doings of this lord, lover of Queen Isabella, whom he doted upon, brought about pleasant adventures, since he was a great wit, of an Alcibiadescal nature, and a chip of the old block. It was he who first conceived the idea of a relay of sweethearts, so that when he went from Paris to Bordeaux, every time he unsaddled his nag he found ready for him a good meal, and a bed with as much lace inside as out. Happy prince! who died on horseback, for he was always across something, in-doors and out. Of his comical jokes our most excellent King Louis the Eleventh has given a splendid sample in the book of the "Cent Nouvelles Nou-

velles'' (Hundred New Novels), written under his superintendence during his exile, at the Court of Burgundy, where, during the long evenings, in order to amuse themselves, he and his Cousin Charolois would relate to each other the good tricks and jokes of the period; and when they were hard up for true stories each of the courtiers tried who could invent the best one. But out of respect for the blood royal, the Dauphin has credited a townsman with that which happened to the Lady of Cany. It was given under the title of "*La Médaille à revers*" (The Case is Altered), in the collection of which it is one of the brightest jewels, and commences the hundred. But now for mine:

The Duc d'Orléans had in his suite a lord of the Province of Picardy, named Raoul d'Hocquetonville, who had taken for wife, to the future trouble of the prince, a young lady related to the house of Burgundy, and rich in domains. But, an exception to the general run of heiresses, she was of so dazzling a beauty that all the ladies of the Court, even the Queen and Madame Valentine, were thrown into the shade; nevertheless, this was as nothing in the lady of Hocquetonville, compared with her Burgundian consanguinity, her inheritances, her prettiness, and gentle nature, because these rare advantages received a religious lustre from her supreme innocence, sweet modesty, and chaste education. The duke had not long gazed upon this heaven-sent flower before he was seized with the fever of love. He fell into a state of melancholy, frequented no bad places, and only with regret now and then did he take a bite at his royal and dainty German morsel, Isabella. He became passionate, and swore either by sorcery, by force, by trickery, or with her consent, to enjoy the favors of this gentle lady, who, by the sight of her sweet body, forced him to the last extremity, during his now long and weary nights. At first, he pursued her with honeyed words, but he soon knew by her untroubled air that she was determined to remain virtuous, for without appearing aston-

ished at his proceedings, or getting angry like certain other ladies, she replied to him: "My lord, I must inform you that I do not desire to trouble myself with the love of other persons, not that I despise the joys which are therein to be experienced (and supreme they must be, since so many ladies cast into the abyss of love their homes, their honor, their future, and everything), but from the love I bear my children. Never would I be the cause of a blush upon their cheeks, for in this idea will I bring up my daughters—that in virtue alone is true happiness to be found. For, my lord, if the days of our old age are more numerous than those of our youth, of them must we think. From those who brought me up I learned to properly estimate this life, and I know that everything therein is transitory, except the security of the natural affections. Thus I wish for the esteem of every one, and above all that of my husband, who is all the world to me. Therefore do I desire to appear honest in his sight. I have finished, and I entreat you to allow me unmolested to attend to my household affairs, otherwise I will unhesitatingly refer the matter to my lord and master, who will quit your service."

This brave reply rendered the King's brother more amorous than ever, and he endeavored to ensnare this noble woman in order to possess her, dead or alive, and he never doubted a bit that he would have her in his clutches, relying upon his dexterity at this kind of sport, the most joyous of all, in which it is necessary to employ the weapons of all other kinds of sport, seeing that this sweet game is taken running, by taking aim, by torchlight, by night, by day, in the town, in the country, in the woods, by the waterside, in nets, with falcons, with the lance, with the horn, with the gun, with the decoy-bird, in snares, in the toils, with a bird-call, by the scent, on the wing, with the cornet, in slime, with a bait, with the lime-twig—indeed, by means of all the snares invented since the banishment of Adam. And gets killed in various different ways, but generally is overridden.

The artful fellow ceased to mention his desires, but had a post of honor given to the Lady of Hocquetonville in the Queen's household. Now, one day that the said Isabella went to Vincennes, to visit the sick King, and left him master of the Hôtel St. Paul, he commanded the chef to have a delicate and royal supper prepared, and to serve it in the Queen's apartments. Then he sent for his obstinate lady by express command, and by one of the pages of the household. The Countess d'Hocquetonville, believing that she was desired by Madame Isabella, for some service appertaining to her post, or invited to some sudden amusement, hastened to the room. In consequence of the precautions taken by the disloyal lover, no one had been able to inform the noble dame of the princess' departure, so she hastened to the splendid chamber, which, in the Hôtel St. Paul, led into the Queen's bedchamber; there she found the Duc d'Orléans alone. Suspecting some treacherous plot, she went quickly into the other room, found no Queen, but heard the prince give vent to a hearty laugh.

"I am undone!" said she. Then she endeavored to run away.

But the good lady-killer had posted about devoted attendants, who, without knowing what was going on, closed the hôtel, barricaded the doors, and in this mansion, so large that it equaled a fourth of Paris, the Lady d'Hocquetonville was as in a desert, with no other aid than that of her patron saint and God. Then, suspecting the truth, the poor lady trembled from head to foot, and fell into a chair; and then the working of this snare, so cleverly conceived, was, with many a hearty laugh, revealed to her by her lover. Directly the duke made a movement to approach her this woman rose and exclaimed, arming herself first with her tongue, and flashing a thousand maledictions from her eyes:

"You will possess me—but dead! Ha! my lord, do not force me to a struggle which must become known to certain people. I may yet retire, and the Sire d'Hocquetonville

shall be ignorant of the sorrow with which you have forever tinged my life. Duke, you look too often in the ladies' faces to find time to study men's, and you do not therefore know your man. The Sire d'Hocquetonville would let himself be hacked to pieces in your service, so devoted is he to you, in memory of your kindness to him, and also because he is partial to you. But as he loves so does he hate; and I believe him to be the man to bring his mace down upon your head, to take his revenge, if you but compel me to utter one cry. Do you desire both my death and your own? But be assured that, as an honest woman, whatsoever happens to me, good or evil, I shall not keep secret. Now, will you let me go?"

The bad fellow began to whistle. Hearing his whistling, the good woman went suddenly into the Queen's chamber, and took from a place known to her therein a sharp stiletto. Then, when the duke followed her to ascertain what this flight meant: "When you pass that line," cried she, pointing to a board, "I will kill myself."

My lord, without being in the least terrified, took a chair, placed it at the very edge of the plank in question, and commenced a glowing description of certain things, hoping to influence the mind of this brave woman, and work her to that point that her brain, her heart, and everything should be at his mercy. Then he commenced to say to her, in that delicate manner to which princes are accustomed, that, in the first place, virtuous women pay dearly for their virtue, since, in order to gain the uncertain blessings of the future, they lose all the sweetest joys of the present, because husbands were compelled, from motives of conjugal policy, not to show them all the jewels in the shrine of love, since the said jewels would so affect their hearts, were so rapturously delicious, so titillatingly voluptuous, that a woman would no longer consent to dwell in the cold regions of domestic life; and he declared this marital abomination to be a great felony, because the least thing a man could do in recognition of the virtuous

life of a good woman and her great merits was to overwork himself, to exert, to exterminate himself, to please her in every way, with fondlings and kissings, and wrestling, and all the delicacies and sweet confectionery of love; and that, if she would taste a little of the seraphic joys of these little ways to her unknown, she would believe all the other things of life as not worth a straw; and that, if such were her wish, he would for ever be as silent as the grave, and thus no scandal would besmear her virtue. And the lewd fellow, perceiving that the lady did not stop her ears, commenced to describe to her, after the fashion of arabesque pictures, which at that time were much esteemed, the wanton inventions of debauchery. Then did his eyes shoot flame, his words burn, and his voice ring, and he himself took great pleasure in calling to mind the various ways of his ladies, naming them to Madame d'Hocquetonville, and even revealing to her the tricks, caresses, and amorous ways of Queen Isabella, and he made use of an expression so gracious and so ardently inciting, that, fancying it caused the lady to relax her hold upon the stiletto a little, he made as if to approach her. But she, ashamed to be found buried in thought, gazed proudly at the diabolical leviathan who tempted her, and said to him: "Fine sir, I thank you. You have caused me to love my husband all the more, for from your discourse I learn how much he esteems me by holding me in such respect that he does not dishonor his couch with the tricks of street-walkers and bad women. I should think myself forever disgraced, and should be contaminated to all eternity, if I put my foot in those sloughs where go these shameless hussies. A man's wife is one thing, and his mistress another."

"I will wager," said the duke, smiling, "that nevertheless, for the future, you spur the Sire d'Hocquetonville to a little sharper pace."

At this the good wife trembled, and cried: "You are a wicked man. Now I both despise and abominate you!"

What ! unable to rob me of my honor, you attempt to poison my mind ! Ah, my lord, this night's work will cost you dear—

If I forgive it, yet
Will not God forget.

“Are not those verses yours ? ”

“Madame,” said the duke, turning pale with anger, “I can have you bound——”

“Oh, no ! I can free myself,” replied she, brandishing the stiletto.

The rascalion began to laugh.

“Never mind,” said he. “I have a means of plunging you into the sloughs of these brazen hussies, as you call them.”

“Never, while I live.”

“Head and heels you shall go in—with your two feet, two hands, your two ivory breasts, and two other things white as snow—your teeth, your hair, and everything. You will go of your own accord ; you shall enter into it lasciviously, and in a way to crush your cavalier, as a wild horse does its rider—stamping, leaping, and snorting. I swear it by Saint Castud ! ”

Instantly he whistled for one of his pages. And when the page came, he secretly ordered him to go and seek the Sire d'Hocquetonville, Savoisy, Tanneguy, Cypierre, and other members of his band, asking them to these rooms to supper, not without at the same time inviting to meet his guests a pretty petticoat or two.

Then he came and sat down in his chair again, ten paces from the lady, off whom he had not taken his eye while giving his commands to the page in a whisper.

“Raoul is jealous,” said he. “Now let me give you a word of advice. In this place,” he added, pointing to a secret door, “are the oils and superfine perfumes of the Queen ; in this other little closet she performs her ablutions and little

feminine offices. I know by much experience that each of you gentle creatures has her own special perfume, by which she is smelt and recognized. So if, as you say, Raoul is overwhelmingly jealous with the worst of all jealousies, you will use these fast hussies' scents, because your danger approaches fast."*

"Ah, my lord, what do you intend to do?"

"You will know when it is necessary that you should know. I wish you no harm, and pledge you my honor, as a loyal knight, that I will most thoroughly respect you, and be forever silent concerning my discomfiture. In short, you will know that the Duc d'Orléans has a good heart, and revenges himself nobly on ladies who treat him with disdain, by placing in their hands the key of Paradise. Only keep your ears open to the joyous words that will be handed from mouth to mouth in the next room, and cough not if you love your children."

Since there was no egress from the royal chamber, and the bays crossing hardly left room to put one's head through, the good prince closed the door of the room, certain of keeping the lady a safe prisoner there, and again impressed upon her the necessity of silence. Then came the merry blades in great haste, and found a good and substantial supper smiling at them from the silver plates upon the table, and the table well arranged and well lighted, loaded with fine silver cups, and full cups of royal wine. Then said their master to them:

"Come! come! to your places, my good friends. I was becoming very weary. Thinking of you, I wished to arrange with you a merry feast after the ancient method, when the Greeks and the Romans said their *Paternosters* to Master Priapus and the learned god called in all countries Bacchus. The feast will be a proper and right hearty one, since at our libation there will be present some pretty crows with three

* *Vous userez de ces senteurs de bourbeteuse, puisque boubier y ha.* *Bourbeteuse* is a dirty woman; and *boubier*, danger or scrape. The exact play upon the word cannot be preserved in the translation.

beaks, of which I know from great experience the best one to kiss."

Then all of them, recognizing their master in all things, took pleasure in this gay discourse, except Raoul d'Hocquetonville, who advanced and said to the prince:

"My lord, I will aid you willingly in any battle but that of the petticoats, in that of spear and axe, but not of the wine-flasks. My good companions here present have not wives at home; it is otherwise with me. I have a sweet wife, to whom I owe my company, and an account of all my deeds and actions."

"Then, since I am a married man I am to blame?" said the duke.

"Ah! my dear master, you are a prince, and can do as you please."

These brave speeches made, as you can imagine, the heart of the lady prisoner hot and cold.

"Ah! my Raoul," thought she, "thou art a noble man."

"You are," said the duke, "a man whom I love, and consider more faithful and praiseworthy than any of my people. The others," said he, looking at the three lords, "are wicked men. But, Raoul," he continued, "sit thee down. When the linnets come—they are linnets of high degree—you can make your way home. S'death! I had treated thee as a virtuous man, ignorant of the the extra-conjugal joys of love, and had carefully put for thee in that room the queen of raptures—a fair demon, in whom is concentrated all feminine inventions. I wished that once in thy life thou, who hast never tasted the essence of love, and dreamed but of war, should know the secret marvels of the gallant amusement, since it is shameful that one of my followers should serve a fair lady badly."

Thereupon the Sire d'Hocquetonville sat down to the table in order to please his prince as far as he could lawfully do so. Then they all commenced to laugh, joke, and talk about the

ladies; and, according to their custom, they related to each other their good fortunes and their love adventures, sparing no woman except the queen of the house, and betraying the little habits of each one, to which followed horrible little confidences, which increased in treachery and lechery as the contents of the goblets grew less. The duke, gay as a universal legatee, drew the guests out, telling lies of himself to learn the truth from them; and his companions ate at a trot, drank at full gallop, and their tongues rattled away faster than ever.

Now, listening to them and heating his brain with wine, the Sire d'Hocquetonville unharnessed himself little by little from his reluctance. In spite of his virtues, he indulged certain desires, and became soaked in these impurities like a saint who defiles himself while saying his prayers. Perceiving which, the prince, on the alert to satisfy his ire and his bile, began to say to him, joking him:

"By St. Castud, Raoul, we are all tarred with the same brush, all discreet away from here. Go; we will say nothing to madame. By heaven! man, I wish thee to taste of the joys of paradise. There," said he, tapping at the door of the room in which was Madame d'Hocquetonville, "in there is a lady of the Court and a friend of the Queen, but the greatest priestess of Venus that ever was, and her equal is not to be found in any courtesan, harlot, dancer, doxy, or hussy. She was engendered at a moment when Paradise was radiant with joy, when nature was procreating, when the planets were whispering vows of love, when the beasts were frisking and capering, and everything was aglow with desire. Although the woman to make an altar her bed, she is nevertheless too great a lady to allow herself to be seen, and too well known to utter any words but the sounds of love. No light will you need, for her eyes flash fire, and attempt no conversation, since she speaks only with movements and twistings more rapid than those of a deer surprised in the forest. Only, my

dear Raoul, with so merry a nag look to your stirrups, sit light in the saddle, since with one plunge she would hurl thee to the ceiling, if you are not careful. She burns always, and is always longing for male society. Our poor dead friend, the young Sire de Giac, met his death through her ; she drained his marrow in one springtime. God's truth ! to know such bliss as that of which she rings the bells and lights the fires, what man would not forfeit a third of his future happiness ? and he who has known her once would for a second night forfeit eternity without regret."

"But," said Raoul, "in things which should be so much alike, how is it there is so great a difference ?"

"Ha ! ha ! ha !"

Thereupon the company burst out laughing, and, animated by the wine and a wink from their master, they all commenced relating droll and quaint conceits, laughing, shouting, and making a great noise. Now, knowing not that an innocent scholar was there, these jokers, who had drowned their sense of shame in the wine-cups, said things to make the figures on the mantel shake, the walls and the ceilings blush ; and the duke surpassed them all, saying that the lady who was in bed in the next room awaiting a gallant should be the empress of these warm imaginations, because she practiced them every night. Upon this, the flagons being empty, the duke pushed Raoul, who let himself be pushed willingly, into the room, and by this means the prince compelled the lady to deliberate by which dagger she would either live or die. At midnight the Sire d'Hocquetonville came out gleefully, not without remorse at having been false to his good wife. Then the Duc de Orléans led Madame d'Hocquetonville out by a garden door, so that she gained her residence before her husband arrived there. "This," said she, in the prince's ear, as she passed the postern, "will cost us all dear."

One year afterward, in the old Rue du Temple, Raoul d'Hocquetonville, who had quitted the service of the duke for

that of Jehan of Burgundy, gave the King's brother a blow on the head with a club, and killed him, as every one knows. In the same year died the Lady d'Hocquetonville, having faded like a flower deprived of air and eaten by a worm. Her good husband had engraved upon her marble tomb, which is in one of the cloisters of Péronne, the following inscription :



HERE LIES
 BERTHA DE BOURGONGNE,
 THE NOBLE AND COMELY WIFE
 OF
 RAOUL, SIRE DE HOCQUETONVILLE.
 ALAS! PRAY NOT FOR HER SOUL.
 SHE
 BLOSSOMED AGAIN IN PARADISE,
 THE ELEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY,
 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD MCCCCVIII.,
 IN THE TWENTY-THIRD YEAR OF HER AGE,
 LEAVING TWO SONS AND HER LORD SPOUSE
 INCONSOLABLE.

This epitaph was written in elegant Latin, but for the convenience of all it was necessary to translate it, although the word *comely* is feeble beside that of *formosa*, which signifies *beautiful in shape*. The Duke of Burgundy, called the Fearless, to whom previous to his death the Sire d'Hocquetonville confided the troubles cemented with lime and sand in his heart, used to say, in spite of his hard-heartedness in these matters, that this epitaph plunged him into a state of melancholy for a month, and that among all the abominations of his cousin of Orleans, there was one for which he would kill him over again if the deed had not already been done, because this wicked man had villainously defaced with vice the most divine

virtue of the world, and had prostituted two noble hearts, the one by the other. When saying this he would think of the lady of Hocquetonville and of his own, whose portrait had been unwarrantably placed in the cabinet where his cousin placed the likenesses of his wenches.

This adventure was so extremely shocking, that when it was related by the Count de Charolois to the Dauphin, afterward Louis XI., the latter would not allow his secretaries to publish it in his collection, out of respect for his great-uncle the Duke of Orleans, and for Dunios his old comrade, the son of the same. But the person of the lady of Hocquetonville is so sublimely virtuous, so exquisitely melancholy, that in her favor the present publication of this narrative will be forgiven, in spite of the diabolical invention and vengeance of Monseigneur d'Orléans. The just death of this rascal nevertheless caused many serious rebellions, which finally Louis XI., losing all patience, put down with fire and sword.

This shows us that there is a woman at the bottom of everything, in France as elsewhere, and that sooner or later we must pay for our follies.



THE DANGER OF BEING TOO INNOCENT.

THE lord of Moncontour was a brave soldier of Tours, who, in honor of the battle gained by the Duke of Anjou, afterward our right glorious King, caused to be built at Vouvray the castle thus named, for he had borne himself most bravely in that affair, where he overcame the greatest of heretics, and from that was authorized to take the name. Now this said captain had two sons, good Catholics, of whom the eldest was in favor at Court. After the peace, which was concluded before the stratagem arranged for St. Bartholomew's day, the good man returned to his manor, which was not ornamented as it is at the present day. There he received the sad announcement of the death of his son, slain in a duel by the lord of Villequier. The poor father was the more cut up at this, as he had arranged a capital marriage for this said son with a young lady of the male branch of Amboise. Now, by this death, most piteously inopportune, vanished all the future and advantages of his family, of which he wished to make a great and noble house. With this idea, he had put his other son in a monastery, under the guidance and government of a man renowned for his holiness, who brought him up in a Christian manner, according to the desire of his father, who wished from high ambition to make of him a cardinal of renown. For this the good abbot kept the young man in a private house, had him to sleep by his side in his cell, allowed no evil weeds to grow in his mind, brought him up in purity of soul and true contrition, as all priests should be. This said clerk, when turned nineteen years, knew no other love than the love of God, no other nature than that of the angels, who have not our carnal properties, in order that

they may live in purity, seeing that otherwise they would make good use of them. The which the King on High, who wished to have His pages always proper, was afraid of. He has done well, because His good little people cannot drink in dramshops or riot in brothels as ours do. He is divinely served; but then, remember, He is Lord of all. Now in this plight the lord of Moncontour determined to withdraw his second son from the cloister, and invest him with the scarlet of the soldier and the courtier, in the place of the ecclesiastical purple; and determined to give him in marriage to the maiden affianced to the dead man, which was wisely determined, because wrapped round with continence and sobriety in all ways as was the little monk, the bride would be as well used and happier than she would have been with the elder, already well hauled over, upset, and spoiled by the ladies of the Court. The befrocked unfrocked, and very sheepish in his ways, followed the sacred wishes of his father, and consented to the said marriage without knowing what a wife, and—what is more curious—what a girl was. By chance, his journey having been hindered by the troubles and marches of conflicting parties, this innocent—more innocent than it is lawful for a man to be innocent—only came to the Castle of Moncontour the evening before the wedding, which was performed with dispensations bought in the archbishopric of Tours. It is necessary here to describe the bride. Her mother, long time a widow, lived in the house of M. de Braguelongne, civil lieutenant of the Castle of Paris, whose wife lived with the lord of Lignieres, to the great scandal of the period. But every one then had so many joists in his own eye that he had no right to notice the rafters in the eyes of others. Now, in all families, people go to perdition, without noticing their neighbors, some at an amble, others at a gentle trout, many at a gallop, and a small number walking, seeing that the road is all down-hill. Thus in these times the devil had many a good orgy in all things, since that miscon-

duct was fashionable. The poor old lady Virtue had retired trembling, no one knew whither, but now here, now there, lived miserably in company with honest women.

In the most noble house of Amboise there still lived the dowager of Chaumont, an old woman of well-proved virtue, in whom had retired all the religion and good conduct of this fine family. The said lady had taken to her bosom, from the age of ten years, the little maiden who is concerned in this adventure, and who never caused Madame Amboise the least anxiety, but left her free in her movements, and she came to see her daughter once a year, when the Court passed that way. In spite of this high maternal reserve, Madame Amboise was invited to her daughter's wedding, and also the lord of Braguelongne, by the good old soldier, who knew his people. But the dear dowager came not to Moncontour, because she could not obtain leave from her sciatica, her cold, nor the state of her legs, which gamboled no longer. Over this the good woman cried copiously. It hurt her much to let go into the dangers of the Court and of life this gentle maiden, as pretty as it was possible for a pretty girl to be, but she was obliged to give her her wings. But it was not without promising her many masses and orisons every evening for her happiness. And comforted a little, the good old lady began to think that the staff of her old age was passing into the hands of a quasi-saint, brought up to do good by the above-mentioned abbot, with whom she was acquainted, the which had aided considerably in the prompt exchange of spouses. At length, embracing her with tears, the virtuous dowager made those last recommendations to her that ladies make to young brides, as that she ought to be respectful to his mother, and obey her husband in everything.

Then the maid arrived with a great noise, conducted by servants, chamberlains, grooms, gentlemen, and people of the house of Chaumont, so that you would have imagined her suite to be that of a cardinal legate. So arrived the two

spouses the evening before their marriage. Then, the feasting over, they were married with great pomp on the Lord's Day, a mass being said at the castle by the Bishop of Blois, who was a great friend of the lord of Moncontour; in short, the feasting, the dancing, and the festivities of all sorts lasted till the morning. But on the stroke of midnight the bridesmaids went to put the bride to bed, according to the custom of Touraine; and during this time they kept quarreling with the innocent husband, to prevent him going to this innocent wife, who sided with them from ignorance. However, the good lord of Moncontour interrupted the jokers and the wits, because it was necessary that his son should occupy himself in well-doing. Then went the innocent into the chamber of his wife, whom he thought more beautiful than the Virgin Marys painted in Italian, Flemish, and other pictures, at whose feet he had said his prayers. But you may be sure he felt very much embarrassed at having so soon become a husband, because he knew nothing of his business, and saw that certain forms had to be gone through concerning which, from great and modest reserve, he had not time to question even his father, who had said sharply to him: .

"You know what you have to do; be valiant therein."

Then he saw the gentle girl who was given him, comfortably tucked up in the bedclothes, terribly curious, her head buried under, but hazarding a glance as at the point of a halberd, and saying to herself:

"I must obey him."

And knowing nothing, she awaited the will of this slightly ecclesiastical gentleman, to whom, in fact, she belonged. Seeing which, the Chevalier de Moncontour came close to the bed, scratched his ear, and knelt down, a thing in which he was expert.

"Have you said your prayers?" said he.

"No," said she; "I have forgotten them. Do you wish me to say them?"

Then the young couple commenced the business of house-keeping by imploring God, which was not at all out of place. But unfortunately the devil heard, and at once replied to their requests, God being much occupied at that time with the new and abominable Reformed religion.

"What did they tell you to do?" said the husband.

"To love you," said she, in perfect innocence.

"That has not been told to me; but I love you, I am ashamed to say, better than I love God."

This speech did not at all alarm the bride.

"I should like," said the husband, "to repose myself in your bed, if it will not disturb you."

"I will make room for you willingly, because I am to submit myself to you."

"Well," said he, "don't look at me, then. I'm going to take my clothes off, and come."

At this virtuous speech, the young damsel turned herself toward the wall in great expectation, seeing that it was for the very first time that she was about to find herself separated from a man by the confines of a shift only. Then came the innocent, gliding into the bed, and thus they found themselves, so to speak, united, but far from you can imagine what.

Did you ever see a monkey brought from across the seas, who for the first time is given a nut to crack? This ape, knowing by high apish imagination how delicious is the food hidden under the shell, sniffs and twists himself about in a thousand apish ways, saying, I know not what, between his chattering jaws. Ah! with what affection he studies it, with what study he examines it, in what examination he holds it, then throws it, rolls and tosses it about with passion, and often, when it is an ape of low extraction and intelligence, leaves the nut. As much did the poor innocent who, toward the dawn, was obliged to confess to his dear wife that, not knowing how to perform his office, or what that office was, or where to ob-

tain the said office, it would be necessary for him to inquire concerning it, to have help and aid.

“Yes,” said she; “since, unhappily, I cannot instruct you.”

In fact, in spite of their efforts, essays of all kinds—in spite of a thousand things which the innocents invent, and which the wise in matters of love know nothing about—the pair dropped off to sleep, wretched at having been unable to discover the secret of marriage. But they wisely agreed to say that they had done so. When the wife got up, still a maiden, seeing that she had not been crowned, she boasted of her night, and said she had the king of husbands, and went on with her chattering and repartees as briskly as those who know nothing of these things. Then every one found the maiden a little too sharp, since for a two-edged joke a lady of Roche-Corbon having incited a young maiden, *de la Bourdaisière*, who knew nothing of such things to slyly ask the bride:

“How many loaves did your husband put in the oven?”

“Twenty-four,” she replied.

Now, as the bridegroom was roaming sadly about, thereby distressing his wife, who followed him with her eyes, hoping to see this state of innocence come to an end, the ladies believed that the joy of that night had cost him dear, and that the said bride was already regretting having so quickly ruined him. And at breakfast came the bad jokes, which at that time were relished as excellent. One said that the bride had an open expression; another, that there had been some good strokes of business done that night in the castle; this one, that the oven had been burned; that one, that the two families had lost something that night that they would never find again. And a thousand other jokes, stupidities, and double meanings that, unfortunately, the husband did not understand. But on account of the great affluence of the relations, neighbors, and others, no one had been to bed; all

had danced, rollicked, and frolicked, as is the custom at noble weddings.

At this was quite contented my said *Sieur de Braguelongne*, upon whom my lady of *Amboise*, excited by the thought of the good things which were happening to her daughter, cast the glances of a falcon in matters of gallant assignation. The poor lieutenant-civil, learned in bailiffs' men and sergeants, and who nabbed all the pickpockets and scamps of Paris, pretended not to see his good fortune although his good lady required him to. You may be sure this great lady's love weighed heavily upon him, so he only kept to her from a spirit of justice, because it was not seeming in a lieutenant-criminal to change his mistresses as often as a man at Court, because he had under his charge morals, the police, and religion. This notwithstanding his rebellion must come to an end. On the day after the wedding a great number of the guests departed; then *Madame d'Amboise* and *Monsieur de Braguelongne* could go to bed, their guests having decamped. Sitting down to supper, the lieutenant received a half-verbal summons to which it was not becoming, as in legal matters, to oppose any reasons for delay.

During supper the said lady *d'Amboise* made more than a hundred little signs in order to draw the good *Braguelongne* from the room where he was with the bride, but out came instead of the lieutenant the husband, to walk about in company with the mother of his sweet wife. Now, in the mind of this innocent there had sprung up like a mushroom an expedient—namely, to interrogate this good lady, whom he considered discreet, for, remembering the religious precepts of his abbot, who had told him to inquire concerning all things of old people expert in the ways of life, he thought of confiding his case to my said lady *d'Amboise*. But he made first awkwardly and shyly certain twists and turns, finding no terms in which to unfold his case. And the lady was also perfectly silent, since she was outrageously struck with the blindness, deafness,

and voluntary paralysis of the lord of Braguelongne ; and said to herself, walking by the side of this delicate morsel, a young innocent of whom she did not think, little imagining that this cat so well provided with young bacon could think of old—

“This ho-ho, with a beard of flies’ legs, a flimsy, old, gray, ruined, shaggy beard—a beard without comprehension, beard without shame, without any feminine respect—beard which pretends neither to feel nor to hear nor to see, a pared away beard, a beaten down, disordered, gutted beard. May the Italian sickness deliver me from this vile joker with a squashed nose, fiery nose, frozen nose, nose without religion, nose dry as a lute table, pale nose, nose without a soul, nose which is nothing but a shadow ; nose which sees not, nose wrinkled like the leaf of the vine ; nose that I hate, old nose, nose full of mud—dead nose. Where have my eyes been to attach myself to this truffle nose, to this old hulk that no longer knows his way? I give my share to the devil of this old juiceless beard, of this old gray beard, of this monkey face, of these old tatters, of this old rag of a man, of this—I know not what ; and I’ll take a young husband who’ll marry me properly, and—— and often—every day—and well——”

In this wise train of thought was she when the innocent began his anthem to this woman, so warmly excited, who at at the first paraphrase took fire in her understanding, like a piece of old touchwood from the carbine of a soldier ; and finding it wise, being more than a little inquisitive, to try her son-in-law, said to herself :

“Ah ! young beard, sweet scented ! ah ! pretty new nose—fresh beard—innocent nose—virgin beard—nose full of joy—beard of spring-time, small key of love ! ”

She kept on talking the round of the garden, which was long, and then arranged with the Innocent that, night come, he should sally forth from his room and get into hers, where she engaged to render him more learned than ever was his father. And the husband was well content, and thanked

Madame d'Amboise, begging her to say nothing of this arrangement.

During this time the good old Braguelongne had been growling and saying to himself, "Old ha-ha! old ho-ho! may the plague take thee! may a cancer eat thee!—worthless old currycomb! old slipper too big for the foot! old arquebus! ten-year-old codfish! old spider that spins no more! old death with open eyes! old devil's cradle! vile lantern of an old town-crier! old wretch whose look kills! old mustache of an old theriacler! old wretch to make dead men weep! old organ-pedal! old sheath worn out with a hundred knives! old church porch, worn out by the knees! old poor-box in which every one has dropped. I'd give all my future to be quit of thee!" As he finished these gentle thoughts the pretty bride, who was thinking of her young husband's great sorrow at not knowing the particulars of that essential item of marriage, and not having the slightest idea what it was, thought to save him much tribulation, shame, and labor by instructing herself. And she counted upon much astonishing and rejoicing him the next night when she should say to him, teaching him his duty: "That's the thing, my love!" Brought up in great respect of old people by her dear dowager, she thought of inquiring of this good man in her sweetest manner to distill for her the sweet mysteries of the commerce. Now, the lord of Braguelongne, ashamed of being lost in sad contemplation of his evening's work, and of saying nothing to his gay companion, put this summary interrogation to the fair bride—"If she was not happy with so good a young husband——"

"He is very good," said she.

"Too good, perhaps," said the lieutenant, smiling.

To be brief, matters were so well arranged between them that the lord of Braguelongne engaged to spare no pains to enlighten the understanding of Madame d'Amboise's daughter-in-law, who promised to come and study her lesson in his

room. The said lady d'Amboise pretended after supper to play terrible music in a high key to Monsieur de Braguelongne, saying that he had no gratitude for the blessings she had brought him—her position, her wealth, her fidelity, etc. In fact, she talked for half an hour without having exhausted a quarter of her ire. From this a hundred knives were drawn between them, but they kept the sheaths. Meanwhile the spouses in bed were arranging to themselves how to get away, in order to please each other. Then the innocent began to say he felt quite giddy, he knew not from what, and wanted to go into the open air. And his maiden wife told him to take a stroll in the moonlight. And then the good fellow began to pity his wife in being left alone a moment. At her desire, both of them at different times left their conjugal couch and came to their preceptors, both very impatient, as you can well believe ; and good instruction was given to them. How? I cannot say, because every one has his own method and practice, and of all sciences this is the most variable in principle. You may be sure that never did scholars receive more gaily the precepts of any language, grammar, or lessons whatsoever. And the two spouses returned to their nest, delighted at being able to communicate to each other the discoveries of their scientific peregrinations.

“Ah, my dear,” said the bride, “you already know more than my master !”

From these curious tests came their domestic joy and perfect fidelity ; because immediately after their entry into the married state they found out how much better each of them was adapted for love than any one else, their teachers included. Thus for the remainder of their days they kept to the legitimate substance of their own persons ; and the lord of Moncontour said in old age to his friends :

“Do like me ; be cuckolds in the blade, and not in the sheaf.”

Which is the true morality of the conjugal condition.

THE DEAR NIGHT OF LOVE.

IN that winter when commenced that first taking up of arms by those of the religion, which was called the Riot of Amboise, an advocate, named Avenelles, lent his house, situated in the Rue des Marmousets, for the interviews and conventions of the Huguenots, being one of them, without knowing, however, that the Prince of Condé, la Regnaudie, and others, intended to carry off the King.

This said Avenelles wore a nasty red beard, as shiny as a stick of licorice, and was devilishly pale, as are all the rogues who take refuge in the darkness of the law; in short, the most evil-minded advocate that has ever lived, laughing at the gallows, selling everybody, and a true Judas. According to certain authors of great experience in subtle rogues, he was in this affair half-knave, half-fool, as is abundantly proved by this narrative. This *procureur* had married a very lovely lady of Paris, of whom he was jealous enough to kill her for a pleat in the sheets for which she could not account, which would have been wrong, because honest creases are often met with. But she folded her clothes very well, so there's an end of the matter. Be sure that, knowing the murderous and evil nature of this man, his wife was faithful enough to him, always ready, like a candlestick, arranged for her duty like a chest which never moves, and opens to order. Nevertheless, the advocate had placed her under the guardianship and pursuing eye of an old servant, a duenna as ugly as a pot without a handle, who had brought up the Sieur Avenelles, and was very fond of him. His poor wife, for all pleasure in her cold domestic life, used to go to the church of St. Jehan, on the Place de Grève, where, as every one knows, the fashionable world was accustomed to meet; and while saying her *paternosters* to God she feasted her eyes upon all these gallants, curled, adorned, and starched,

young, comely, and flitting about like true butterflies, and finished by picking out from among the lot a good gentleman, lover of the Queen-mother, and a handsome Italian, with whom she was smitten because he was in the May of his age, nobly dressed, a graceful mover, brave in mien, and was all that a lover should be to bestow a heart full of love upon an honest woman too tightly squeezed by the bonds of matrimony, which torment her, and always excite her to unharness herself from the conjugal yoke. And you can imagine that the young gentleman grew to admire madame, whose silent love spoke secretly to him, without either the devil or themselves knowing how. Both one and the other had their correspondences of love. At first the advocate's wife adorned herself only to come to church, and always came in some new sumptuousity; and, instead of thinking of God, she made God angry by thinking of her handsome gentleman, and leaving her prayers, she gave herself up to the fire which consumed her heart and moistened her eyes, her lips, and everything, seeing that this fire always dissolves itself in water; and often said she to herself: "Ha! I would give my life for a single embrace with this pretty lover who loves me." Often, too, in place of saying her litanies to madame the Virgin, she thought in her heart: "To feel the glorious youth of this gentle lover, to have the full joys of love, to taste all in one moment, little should I mind the flames into which the heretics are thrown." Then the gentleman gazing at the charms of this goodwife, and her burning blushes when he glanced at her, came always close to her stool, and addressed to her those requests which the ladies understand so well. Then he said aside to himself: "By the double horn of my father, I swear to have that woman, though it cost me my life."

And when the duenna turned her head, the two lovers squeezed, pressed, breathed, ate, devoured, and kissed each other by a look which would have set light to the match of a musketeer, if the musketeer had been there. It was certain that

a love so far advanced in the heart should have its fruition. The gentleman, dressed as a scholar of Montaigne, began to regale the clerks of the said Avenelles and to joke in their company, in order to learn the habits of the husband, his hours of absence, his journeys, and everything, watching for an opportunity to stick his horns on. And this was how, to his injury, the opportunity occurred: The advocate, obliged to follow the course of this conspiracy, and, in case of failure, intending to revenge himself upon the Guises, determined to go to Blois, where the Court there was in great danger of being carried off.* Knowing this, the gentleman came first to the town of Blois, and there arranged a master-trap, into which the Sieur Avenelles should fall, in spite of his cunning, and not come out until steeped in a crimson cuckoldom. This said Italian, intoxicated with love, called together all his pages and vassals, and posted them in such a manner that on the arrival of the advocate, his wife, and her duenna, it was stated to them at all the hostelrys at which they wished to put up that the hostelry being full in consequence of the sojourn of the court, they must go elsewhere. Then the gentleman made such an arrangement with the landlord of the Royal Sun that he had the whole of the house, and occupied it, without any of the usual servants of the place remaining there. For greater security, my lord sent the said master and his people into the country, and put his own in their places, so that the advocate should know nothing of this arrangement. Behold my good gentleman who lodges his friends come to the court in the hostelry, and for himself keeps a room situated above those in which he intends to put his lovely mistress, her advocate, and the duenna, not without first having cut a trap in the boards. And his steward being charged to play the part of the innkeeper, his pages dressed like guests, and his female servants like servants of the inn, he waited for spies to convey to him the *dramatis personæ* of

* Vide "About Catherine de' Medici" in the *Comédie Humaine*.

this farce—viz., wife, husband, and duenna, none of whom failed to come. Seeing the immense wealth of the great lords, merchants, warriors, members of the service, and others, brought by the sojourn of the young King, of two queens, the Guises, and all the Court, no one had a right to be astonished or to talk of the roguish trap, or of the confusion come to the Royal Sun. Behold now the *Sieur Avenelles*, on his arrival, bundled about, he, and his wife, and the duenna, from inn to inn, and thinking themselves very fortunate in being received at the Royal Sun, where the gallant was getting warm, and love was burning. The advocate being lodged, the lover walked about in the courtyard, watching and waiting for a glance from his lady; and he did not have to wait very long, since the fair *Avenelles*, looking soon into the court, after the custom of the ladies, there recognized, not without great throbbing of the heart, her gallant and well-beloved gentleman. At that she was very happy; and if by a lucky chance both had been alone together for an ounce of time, the good gentleman would not have had to wait for his good fortune, so burning was she from head to foot.

“How warm it is in the rays of this lord,” said she, meaning to say sun, since it was then shining fiercely.

Hearing this, the advocate sprang to the window, and beheld my gentleman.

“Ha! you want lords, my dear, do you?” said the advocate, dragging her by the arm and throwing her like one of his bags on the bed. “Remember that if I have a pencase at my side instead of a sword, I have a penknife in this pencase, and the penknife will go into your heart on the least suspicion of conjugal impropriety. I believe I have seen that gentleman somewhere.”

The advocate was so terribly spiteful that the lady rose, and said to him:

“Well, kill me. I am afraid of deceiving you. Never touch me again, after having thus menaced me. And from

to-day I shall never think of sleeping save with a lover more gentle than are you."

"There, there, my little one!" said the advocate, surprised. "We have gone a little too far. Kiss me, chick-a-biddy, and forgive me."

"I will neither kiss nor pardon you," said she. "You are a wretch!"

Avenelles, enraged, wished to take by force that which his wife denied him, and from this resulted a combat, from which the husband emerged clawed all over. But the worst of it was that the advocate, covered with scratches, being expected by the conspirators, who were holding a council, was obliged to quit his good wife, leaving her to the care of the old woman.

The knave having departed, the gentleman, putting one of his servants to keep watch at the corner of the street, mounts to his blessed trap, lifts it noiselessly, and calls the lady by a gentle *psit! psit!* which was understood by the heart, which generally understands everything. The lady lifts her head, and sees her pretty lover four flea-jumps above her. Upon a sign, she takes hold of two cords of black silk, to which were attached loops, through which she passes her arms, and in the twinkling of an eye is translated by two pulleys from her bed through the ceiling into the room above, and the trap closing as it had opened, left the old duenna in a state of great flabbergastation, when, turning her head, she neither saw robe nor woman, and perceived that the woman had been stolen. How? by whom? in what way? where?—Presto! Foro! Magico! As much knew the alchemists at their furnaces reading Herr Trippa. Only the old woman knew well the crucible, and the great work—the one was cuckoldom, and the other the private property of Madame Advocate. She remained dumfounded, watching for the Sieur Avenelles—as well say death, for in his rage he would attack everything, and the poor duenna could not run away, because, with great

prudence, the jealous man had taken the keys with him. At first sight, Madame Avenelles found a dainty supper, a good fire in the grate, but a better in the heart of her lover, who seized her, and kissed her, with tears of joy, on the eyes first of all, to thank them for their sweet glances during devotion at the church of St. Jehan en Grève. Nor did the glowing better-half of the lawyer refuse her little mouth to his love, but allowed herself to be properly pressed, adored, caressed, delighting to be properly pressed, admirably adored, and calorously caressed after the manner of eager lovers. And both agreed to be all in all to each other the whole night long, no matter what the result might be, she counting the future as a fig in comparison with the joys of this night, he relying upon his cunning and his sword to obtain many another. In short, both of them caring little for life, because at one stroke they consummated a thousand lives, enjoyed with each other a thousand delights, giving to each other the double of their own—believing, he and she, that they were falling into an abyss, and wishing to roll there closely clasped, hurling all the love of their souls with rage in one throw. Therein they loved each other well. Thus they know not love, the poor citizens, who live mechanically with their good wives, since they know not the fierce beating of the heart, the hot gush of life, and the vigorous clasp as do two young lovers, closely united and glowing with passion, who embrace in face of the danger of death. Now the youthful lady and the gentleman ate little supper, but retired early to rest. Let us leave them there, since no words, except those of paradise unknown to us, would describe their delightful agonies and agonizing delights. Meanwhile the husband, so well cuckolded that all memory of marriage had been swept away by love—the said Avenelles found himself in a great fix. To the council of the Huguenots came the Prince of Condé, accompanied by all the chiefs and bigwigs, and there it was resolved to carry off the Queen-mother, the Guises, the young King, the young

Queen, and to change the government. This becoming serious, the advocate, seeing his head at stake, did not feel the ornament being planted there, and ran to divulge the conspiracy to the cardinal of Lorraine, who took the rogue to the duke his brother, and all three held a consultation, making fine promises to the *Sieur Avenelles*, whom with the greatest difficulty they allowed, toward midnight, to depart, at which hour he issued secretly from the castle. At this moment the pages of the gentleman and all his people were having a right jovial supper in honor of the fortuitous wedding of their master. Now, arriving at the height of the festivities, in the middle of the intoxication and joyous huzzahs, he was assailed with jeers, jokes, and laughter that turned him sick when he came into his room. The poor *duenna* wished to speak, but the advocate promptly planted a blow in her stomach, and by a gesture commanded her to be silent. Then he felt in his valise, and took therefrom a good poniard. While he was opening and sharpening it, a frank, naïve, joyous, amorous, pretty, celestial roar of laughter, followed by certain words of easy comprehension, came down through the trap. The cunning advocate, blowing out his candle, saw through the cracks in the boards caused by the shrinking of the door a light, which vaguely explained the mystery to him, for he recognized the voice of his wife and that of the combatant. The husband took the *duenna* by the arm, and went softly up the stairs, searching for the door of the chamber in which were the lovers, and did not fail to find it. Fancy! that like a horrid, rude advocate, he burst open the door, and with one spring was on the bed, in which he surprised his wife, half-dressed, in the arms of the gentleman.

“Ah!” said she.

The lover having avoided the blow, tried to snatch the poniard from the hands of the knave, who held it firmly. Now, in this struggle of life and death, the husband, finding himself hindered by the lieutenant, who clutched him tightly

with his fingers of iron, and bitten by his wife, who tore away at him with a will, gnawing him as a dog gnaws a bone, he thought instantly of a better way to gratify his rage. Then the devil, newly horned, maliciously ordered, in his patois, the servant to tie the lovers with the silken cords of the trap, and, throwing the poniard away, he helped the duenna to make them fast. And the thing thus done in a moment, he rammed some linen into their mouths to stop their cries, and ran to his good poniard without saying a word. At this moment there entered several officers of the Duke of Guise, whom during the struggle no one had heard turning the house upside down, looking for the *Sieur Avenelles*. These soldiers, suddenly warned by the cries of the pages of the lord, bound, gagged, and half-killed, threw themselves between the man with the poniard and the lovers, disarmed him, and accomplished their mission by arresting him and marching him off to the castle prison, he, his wife, and the duenna. At the same time the people of the Guises, recognizing one of their master's friends, with whom at this moment the Queen was most anxious to consult, and whom they were enjoined to summon to the Council, invited him to come with them. Then the gentleman, soon untied, dressing himself, said aside to the chief of the escort, that on his account, for the love of him, he should be careful to keep the husband away from his wife, promising him his favor, good advancement, and even a few deniers, if he were careful to obey him on this point. And for greater surety he explained to him the why and the wherefore of the affair, adding that if the husband found himself within reach of this fair lady he would give her for certain a blow in the belly from which she would never recover. Finally, he ordered him to place the lady in the jail of the castle, in a pleasant place level with the gardens, and the advocate in a safe dungeon, not without chaining him hand and foot. The which the said officer promised, and arranged matters according to the wish of the gentleman, who accompanied the

lady as far as the courtyard of the castle, assuring her that this business would make her a widow, and that he would perhaps espouse her in legitimate marriage. In fact, the *Sieur Avenelles* was thrown into a damp dungeon without air, and his pretty wife placed in a room above him, out of consideration for her lover, who was the *Sieur Scipion Sardini*, a noble of *Lucca*, exceedingly rich, and, as has before been stated, a friend of *Queen Catherine de' Medici*, who at that time did everything in concert with the *Guises*. Then he went up quickly to the *Queen's* apartments, where a great secret council was then being held, and there the Italian learned what was going on, and the danger of the Court. *Monseigneur Sardini* found the privy councilors much embarrassed and surprised at this dilemma, but he made them all agree, telling them to turn it to their own advantage; and to his advice was due the clever idea of lodging the King in the Castle of *Amboise*, in order to catch the heretics there like foxes in a bag, and there to slay them all. Indeed, every one knows how the *Queen-mother* and the *Guises* dissimulated, and how the *Riot of Amboise* terminated. This is not, however, the subject of the present narrative. When in the morning every one had quitted the chamber of the *Queen-mother*, where everything had been arranged, *Monseigneur Sardini*, in no way oblivious of his love for the fair *Avenelles*, although he was at the time deeply smitten with the lovely *Limeuil*, a girl belonging to the *Queen-mother*, and her relation by the house of *la Tour de Turenne*, asked why the good *Judas* had been caged. Then the cardinal of *Lorraine* told him that his intention was not in any way to harm the rogue, but that, fearing his repentance, and for greater security of his silence until the end of the affair, he had put him out of the way, and would liberate him at the proper time.

"Liberate him!" said the *Luccanese*. "Never! Put him in a sack, and throw the old black gown into the *Loire*. In the first place I know him; he is not the man to forgive

you his imprisonment, and will return to the Protestant church. Thus this will be a work pleasant to God, to rid him of a heretic. Then no one will know your secrets, and not one of his adherents will think of asking you what has become of him, because he is a traitor. Let me procure the escape of his wife and arrange the rest; I will take it off your hands."

"Ha! ha!" said the cardinal; "you give good counsel. Now I will, before distilling your advice, have them both more securely guarded. Hi, there!"

Came an officer of police, who was ordered to let no person, whoever he might be, communicate with the two prisoners. Then the cardinal begged Sardini to say at his hotel that the said advocate had departed from Blois to return to his causes in Paris. The men charged with the arrest of the advocate had received verbal orders to treat him as a man of importance, so they neither stripped nor robbed him. Now the advocate had kept thirty gold crowns in his purse, and resolved to lose them all to assure his vengeance, and proved by good arguments to the gaolers that it was allowable for him to see his wife, on whom he doted, and whose legitimate embrace he desired. Monseigneur Sardini, fearing for his mistress the danger of the proximity of this red learned rogue, and for her having great fear of certain evils, determined to carry her off in the night, and put her in a place of safety. Then he hired some boatmen and also their boat, placing them near the bridge, and ordered three of his most active servants to file the bars of the cell, seize the lady, and conduct her to the wall of the gardens, where he would await her.

These preparations being made, and good files bought, he obtained an interview in the morning with the Queen-mother, whose apartments were situated above the stronghold in which lay the said advocate and his wife, believing that the Queen would willingly lend herself to this flight. Presently he was

received by her, and begged her not to think it wrong that, at the instigation of the cardinal and of the Duke of Guise, he should deliver this lady; and beside this, urged her very strongly to tell the cardinal to throw the man into the water. To which the Queen said: "Amen." Then the lover sent quickly to his lady a letter in a plate of cucumbers, to advise her of her approaching widowhood, and the hour of flight, with all of which was the fair citizen well content. Then at dusk the soldiers of the watch being got out of the way by the Queen, who sent them to look at a ray of the moon, which frightened her, behold the servants raised the grating, and called the lady, who came quickly enough, and was led to the house unto Monseigneur Sardini.

But the postern closed, and the Italian outside with the lady: behold the lady throw aside her mantle, see the lady change into an advocate, and see my said advocate seize his cuckold by the collar and half strangle him, dragging him toward the water to throw him to the bottom of the Loire; and Sardini begin to defend himself, to shout, and to struggle, without being able, in spite of his dagger, to shake off this devil in long robes. Then he was quiet, falling into a slough under the feet of the advocate, whom he recognized through the mists of this diabolical combat, and by the light of the moon, his face plashed with the blood of his wife. The enraged advocate quitted the Italian, believing him to be dead, and also because servants, armed with torches, came running up. But he had time to jump into the boat and push off in great haste.

Thus poor Madame Avenelles died alone, since Monseigneur Sardini, badly strangled, was found, and revived from this murder; and later, as every one knows, married the fair Limeuil after this sweet girl had been brought to bed in the Queen's cabinet—a great scandal, which from friendship the Queen-mother wished to conceal, and which from great love Sardini, to whom Catherine gave the splendid estate of

Chaumont-sur-Loire, and also the castle, covered with marriage.

But he had been so brutally used by the husband that he did not make old bones, and the fair Limeuil was left a widow in her spring-time. In spite of his misdeeds the advocate was not searched after. He was cunning enough eventually to get included in the number of those conspirators who were not prosecuted, and returned to the Huguenots, for whom he worked hard in Germany.

Poor Madame Avenelles, pray for her soul! for she was hurled no one knew whither, and had neither prayers of the church nor Christian burial. Alas! shed a tear for her, ye ladies lucky in your loves.



THE SERMON OF THE MERRY VICAR OF MEUDON.

WHEN, for the last time, came Master Francis Rabelais to the court of King Henry, the second of the name, it was in that winter when the will of nature compelled him to quit forever his fleshly garb, and live forever in his writings resplendent with that good philosophy to which we shall always be obliged to return. The goodman had, at that time, counted as nearly as possible seventy flights of the swallow. His Homeric head was but scantily ornamented with hair, but his beard was still perfect in its flowing majesty ; there was still an air of spring-time in his quiet smile and wisdom on his ample brow. He was a fine old man according to the statement of those who had the happiness to gaze upon his face, to which Socrates and Aristophanes, formerly enemies, but there become friends, contributed their features.

Hearing his last hour tinkling in his ears, he determined to go and pay his respects to the King of France, because he having just at that time arrived in his Castle of Tournelles, the goodman's house being situated in the gardens of St. Paul, was not a stone's throw distant from the court. He soon found himself in the presence of Queen Catherine, Madame Diane, whom she received from motives of policy, the King, the constable, the Cardinals of Lorraine and Bellay, Messieurs de Guise, the Sieur de Birague, and other Italians, who at that time stood well at Court in consequence of the Queen's protection ; the admiral, Montgomery, the officers of the household, and certain poets, such as Melin de St. Gelay, Philibert de l'Orme, and the Sieur Brantôme.

Perceiving the good man, the King, who knew his wit, said to him with a smile, after a short conversation :

“Hast thou ever delivered a sermon to thy parishioners of Meudon?”

Master Rabelais, thinking that the King was joking, since he had never troubled himself further about his post than to collect the revenues accruing from it, replied:

“Sire, my listeners are in every place, and my sermons heard throughout Christendom.”

Then glancing at all the courtiers, who, with the exception of Messieurs du Bellay and Châtillon, considered him to be nothing but a learned merry-andrew, while he was really the king of all wits, and a far better king than he whose crown only the courtiers venerate, there came into the good man's head the malicious idea to philosophically pump over their heads, just as it pleased Gargantua to give the Parisians a bath from the turrets of Notre Dame, so he added:

“If you are in a good humor, Sire, I can regale you with a capital little sermon, always appropriate, and which I have kept under the tympanum of my left ear in order to deliver it in a fit place, by way of an aulic parable.”

“Gentlemen,” said the King, “Master Francis Rabelais has the ear of the Court, and our salvation is concerned in his speech. Be silent, I pray you, and give heed; he is fruitful in evangelical drolleries.”

“Sire,” said the good vicar, “I commence.”

All the courtiers became silent, and arranged themselves in a circle, pliant as osiers before the father of Pantagruel, who unfolded to them the following tale, in words the illustrious eloquence of which it is impossible to equal. But since this tale has only been verbally handed down to us, the author will be pardoned if he write it after his own fashion:

“In his old age Gargantua took to strange habits, which greatly astonished his household, but the which he was forgiven, since he was seven hundred and four years old, in spite of the statement of St. Clement of Alexandria in his ‘Stromates,’ which makes out that at this time he was a

quarter of a day less, which matters little to us. Now this paternal master, seeing that everything was going wrong in his house, and that every one was fleecing him, conceived a great fear that he would in his last moments be stripped of everything, and resolved to invent a more perfect system of management in his domains; and he did well. In a cellar of Gargantua's abode he hid away a fine heap of red wheat, beside twenty jars of mustard and several delicacies, such as plums and Touraine rolls, articles of dessert, Olivet cheese, goat cheese, and others, well known between Langeais and Loches, pots of butter, hare pasties, preserved ducks, pigs' trotters in bran, boat-loads and pots full of crushed peas, pretty little pots of Orleans quince preserve, hogsheads of lampreys, measures of green sauce, river game, such as francolins, teal, sheldrake, heron, and flamingo, all preserved in sea-salt, dried raisins, tongues smoked in the manner invented by Happe-Mousche, his celebrated ancestor, and sweetstuff for Gargamelle on feast-days; and a thousand other things which are detailed in the records of the Ripuary laws and in certain folios of the Capitularies, Pragmatics, royal establishments, ordinances, and institutions of the period. To be brief, the good man, putting his spectacles on his nose or his nose in his spectacles, looked about for a fine flying dragon or unicorn to whom the guard of this precious treasure could be committed.

"With this thought in his head he strolled about the gardens. He did not desire Coquecigrue,* because the Egyptians were afraid of them, as it appeared in the hieroglyphics. He dismissed the idea of engaging the legions of Caucquemarres,† because emperors disliked them and also the Romans according to that sulky fellow Tacitus. He rejected the Pechro-

* Coquecigrue—an imaginary animal. The word is probably compounded of *cog*, *cygne*, and *grue*. There is a French saying still in vogue, "A la venue des coquecigrues"—that is to say, never.

† Caucquemarre—also an imaginary animal. The name was likewise given occasionally to sorcerers.

choliars in council assembled, the Magi, the Druids, the legion of Papimania, and the Massorets, who grew like quelch-grass and overran all the land, as he had been told by his son, Pantagrue, on his return from his journey. The goodman, calling to mind old stories, had no confidence in any race, and if it had been permissible would have implored the Creator for a new one, but not daring to trouble Him about such trifles, did not know whom to choose, and was thinking that his wealth would be a great trouble to him, when he met in his path a pretty little shrew-mouse of the noble race of shrew-mice, who bear all gules on an azure ground.* By the gods! be sure that it was a splendid animal, with the finest tail of the whole family, and was strutting about in the sun like a brave shrew-mouse. It was proud of having been in this world since the Deluge, according to letters-patent of indisputable nobility, registered by the parliament of the universe, since it appears from the œcumenical inquiry a shrew-mouse was in Noah's ark."

Here Master Alcofribas raised his cap slightly, and said, reverently:

"It was Noah, my lords, who planted the vine, and first had the honor of getting drunk upon the juice of its fruit.

"For it is certain," he continued, "that a shrew-mouse was in the vessel from which we all came; but the men have made bad marriages; not so the mice, because they are more jealous of their coat-of-arms than any other animals, and would not receive a field-mouse among them, even though he had the especial gift of being able to convert grains of sand into fine fresh hazelnuts. This fine gentlemanly character so pleased the good Gargantua that he decided to give the post of watching his granaries to the shrew-mouse, with the most ample powers—of justice, *committimus*, *missi dominici*, clergy, men-at-arms, and all. The shrew-mouse promised faithfully to accomplish his task and to do his duty as a loyal beast, on

* In heraldry: Azure, horizontal lines; Gules, perpendicular ones.

condition that he lived on a heap of grain, which Gargantua thought perfectly fair.

“The shrew-mouse began to caper about in his domain as jolly as a prince who is happy, reconnoitring his immense empire of mustard, countries of sugar, provinces of ham, duchies of raisins, counties of chitterlings, and baronies of all sorts, scrambling on to the heap of grain, and frisking his tail against everything. To be brief, everywhere was the shrew-mouse received with honor by the pots, which kept a respectful silence, except two golden tankards, which knocked against each other like the bells of a church ringing a tocsin, at which he was much pleased, and thanked them, right and left, by a nod of the head, while promenading in the rays of the sun, which were illuminating his domain. Therein so splendidly did the brown color of his hair shine forth, that one would have thought him a northern king in his sable furs. After his twists, turns, jumps, and capers, he munched two grains of wheat, sat upon the heap like a king in full court, and fancied himself the most illustrious of shrew-mice.

“At this moment there came from their accustomed holes the gentlemen of the night-prowling court, who scamper with their little feet across the floors; these gentlemen being the rats, mice, and other gnawing, thieving, and crafty animals, of whom the citizens and housewives complain. When they saw the shrew-mouse they took fright, and all remained shyly at the threshold of their dens. Among these common people, in spite of the danger, one old infidel of the trotting, nibbling race of mice advanced a little, and, putting his nose in the air, had the courage to stare my lord shrew-mouse full in the face, although the latter was proudly squatted upon his rump, with his tail in the air; and he came to the conclusion that he was a devil, from whom nothing but scratches were to be gained.

“And from these facts, Gargantua, in order that the high authority of his lieutenant might be universally known by all the shrew-mice, cats, weasels, martins, field-mice, mice, rats,

and other bad characters of the same kidney, had lightly dipped his muzzle, pointed as a larding-needle, in oil of musk, which all shrew-mice have since inherited, because this one, in spite of the sage advice of Gargantua, rubbed himself against others of his breed. From this sprang the troubles in Muzaraignia, of which I will give you a good account in an historical book when I get an opportunity.

“Then an old mouse, or rat—the rabbies of the Talmud have not yet agreed concerning the species—perceiving by this perfume that this shrew-mouse was appointed to guard the grain of Gargantua, and had been sprinkled with virtues, invested with full powers, and armed at all points, was alarmed lest he should no longer be able to live according to the custom of mice, upon the meats, morsels, crusts, crumbs, leavings, bits, atoms, and fragments of this veritable Canaan of rats.

“In this dilemma the good mouse, artful as an old courtier who had lived under two regencies and three kings, resolved to try the mettle of the shrew-mouse, and devote himself to the salvation of the jaws of his race.

“This would have been a laudable thing in a man, but it was far more so in a mouse, belonging to a tribe who live for themselves alone, barefacedly and shamelessly, and in order to gratify themselves would defile a consecrated wafer, gnaw a priest’s stole without shame, and would drink out of a communion chalice, caring nothing for God. The mouse advanced with many a bow and scrape, and the shrew-mouse let him advance rather near—for, to tell the truth, these animals are naturally short-sighted. Then this Curtius of nibblers made his little speech, not in the jargon of common mice, but in the polite language of shrew-mice :

“ ‘ My lord, I have heard with very much concern of your glorious family, of which I am one of the most devoted slaves. I know the legend of your ancestors, who were thought much of by the ancient Egyptians, who held them in great venera-

tion and adored them like other sacred birds. Nevertheless, your fur robe is so royally perfumed, and its color is so splendiferously tanned, that I am doubtful if I recognize you as belonging to this race, since I have never seen any of them so gorgeously attired.

“ ‘However, you have swallowed the grain after the antique fashion. Your proboscis is a proboscis of sapience ; you have kicked like a learned shrew-mouse ; but if you are a true shrew-mouse you should have in I know not what part of your ear—I know not what special auditorial channel, which I know not, what wonderful door, closes I know not how, and I know not with what movements, by your secret commands to give you, I know not why, license not to listen to I know not what things, which would be displeasing to you, on account of the special and peculiar perfection of your faculty of hearing everything, which would often pain you.’

“ ‘ ‘True,’ said the shrew-mouse, ‘the door has just fallen. I hear nothing !’

“ ‘ ‘Ah, I see,’ said the old rogue.

“ ‘And he made for the pile of corn, from which he commenced to take his store for the winter.

“ ‘ ‘Do you hear anything ?’ asked he.

“ ‘ ‘I hear the pit-a-pat of my heart.’

“ ‘ ‘Kouick !’ cried all the mice ; ‘we shall be able to hoodwink him.’

“ ‘The shrew-mouse, fancying that he had met with a faithful vassal, opened the trap of his musical orifice, and heard the noise of the grain going toward the hole. Then, without having recourse to forfeiture, the justice of commissaries, he sprang upon the old mouse, and squeezed him to death. Glorious death ! for this hero died in the thick of the grain, and was canonized as a martyr. The shrew-mouse took him by the ears and placed him on the door of the granary, after the fashion of the Ottoman Porte, where my good Panurge was within an ace of being spitted. At the cries of the dying

wretch the rats, mice, and others made for their holes in great haste.

“When the night had fallen they came to the cellar, convoked for the purpose of holding a council to consider public affairs; to which meeting, in virtue of the Papirian and other laws, their lawful wives were admitted. The rats wished to pass before the mice, and serious quarrels about precedence nearly spoiled everything; but a big rat gave his arm to a mouse, and the gaffer rats and gammar mice being paired off in the same way, all were soon seated on their rumps, tails in air, muzzles stretched, whiskers stiff, and their eyes brilliant as those of a falcon. Then commenced a deliberation, which finished up with insults and a confusion worthy of an œcumenical council of holy fathers. One said this, and another said that, and a cat passing by took fright and ran away, hearing these strange noises:

“ ‘Bou, bou, frou, ou, ou, houic, houic, briff, briffnac, nac, nac, fouix, fouix, trr, trr, trr, trr, za, za, zaaa, brr, brrr, raaa, ra, ra, ra, ra, fouix!’ so well blended together in a Babel of sound, that a council at the Town Hall could not have made a greater hubbub.

“During this tempest a little mouse, who was not old enough to enter parliament, thrust through a chink her inquiring snout, the hair on which was as downy as that of all mice, too downy to be caught. As the tumult increased, by degrees her body followed her nose, until she came to the hoop of a cask, against which she so dexterously squatted that she might have been mistaken for a work of art carved in antique bas-relief. Lifting his eyes to heaven to implore a remedy for the misfortunes of the State, an old rat perceived this pretty mouse, so gentle and shapely, and declared that the State might be saved by her. All the muzzles turned to this Lady of Good Help, became silent, and agreed to let her loose upon the shrew-mouse, and, in spite of the anger of certain envious mice, she was triumphantly marched round the cellar,

where, seeing her walk mincingly, mechanically move her tail, shake her cunning little head, twitch her diaphanous ears, and lick with her little red tongue the hairs just sprouting on her cheeks, the old rats fell in love with her, and wagged their wrinkled, white-whiskered jaws with delight at the sight of her, as did formerly the old men of Troy, admiring the lovely Helen returning from her bath.

“Then the maiden was conducted to the granary, with instructions to make a conquest of the shrew-mouse’s heart, and save the fine red grain, as did formerly the fair Hebrew, Esther, for the chosen people, with the Emperor Ahasuerus, as it is written in the master-book, for *Bible* comes from the Greek word *Biblos*, as if to say the only book.

“The mouse promised to deliver the granaries, for by a lucky chance she was the queen of mice, a fair, plump, pretty little mouse, the most delicate little lady that ever scampered merrily across the floors, scratched between the walls, and gave utterance to little cries of joy at finding nuts, meal, and crumbs of bread in her path; a true fay, pretty and playful, with an eye clear as crystal, a little head, sleek skin, amorous body, rosy feet, and velvet tail—a high-born mouse and polished speaker, with a natural love of bed and idleness—a merry mouse, more cunning than an old doctor of Sorbonne fed on parchment, lively, white bellied, streaked on the back, with sweetly moulded breasts, pearl-white teeth, and of a frank, open nature—in fact, a true king’s morsel.”

This portraiture was so bold—the mouse appearing to have been the living image of Madame Diane, then present—that the courtiers stood aghast. Queen Catherine smiled, but the King was in no laughing humor.

But Rabelais went on without paying any attention to the winks of the Cardinal Bellay and de Châtillon, who were terrified for the Goodman.

“The pretty mouse,” said he, continuing, “did not beat long about the bush, and from the first moment that she

trotted before the shrew-mouse, she had enslaved him forever by her coquetries, affectations, friskings, provocations, little refusals, piercing glances, and the wiles of a maiden who desires yet dares not ; amorous oglings, little caresses, preparatory tricks, pride of a mouse who knows her value, laughings and squeakings, triflings, and other endearments, feminine, treacherous, and captivating ways, all traps which are abundantly used by the females of all nations.

“When, after many wriggings, smacks in the face, nose lickings, gallantries of amorous shrew-mice, frowns, sighs, seranades, titbits, suppers and dinners on the pile of corn, and other attentions, the superintendent overcame the scruples of his beautiful mistress, he became the slave of this incestuous and illicit love, and the mouse, leading her lord by the snout, became queen of everything, nibbled his cheese, ate the sweets, and foraged everywhere. This the shrew-mouse permitted to the empress of his heart, although he was ill at ease, having broken his oath made to Gargantua, and betrayed the confidence placed in him.

“Pursuing her advantage with the pertinacity of a woman, one night that they were joking together, the mouse remembered the dear old fellow her father, and desiring that he should make his meals off the grain, she threatened to leave her lover cold and lonely in his domain if he did not allow her to indulge her filial piety. In the twinkling of a mouse’s eye he had granted letters-patent, sealed with a green seal, with tags of crimson silk, to his wench’s father, so that the Gargantuan palace was open to him at all hours, and he went at liberty to see his good virtuous daughter, kiss her on the forehead, and eat his fill, but always in a corner.

“Then there arrived a venerable old rat, weighing about twenty-five ounces, with a white tail, marching like the president of a court of justice, wagging his head, and followed by fifteen or twenty nephews, all with teeth sharp as saws, who demonstrated to the shrew-mouse by little speeches

and questions of all kinds that they, his relations, would soon be loyally attached to him, and would help him to count the things committed to his charge, arrange and ticket them, in order that when Gargantua came to visit them he would find everything in perfect order.

“There was an air of truth about these promises.

“The poor shrew-mouse was, however, in spite of this speech, troubled by ideas from on high, and serious pricking of his shrew-mousian conscience. Seeing that he turned up his nose at everything, went about slowly and with a careworn face, one morning the mouse, who was pregnant by him, conceived the idea of calming his doubts and easing his mind by a Sor-bonnicall consultation, and sent for the doctors of the tribe.

“During the day she introduced to him one, the Sieur Evegault, who had just stepped out of a cheese, where he lived in perfect abstinence, an old confessor of high degree, a merry fellow of good appearance, with a fine black skin, firm as a rock, and slightly tonsured on the head by the pat of a cat’s claw. He was a grave rat, with a monastical paunch, having much studied scientific authorities by nibbling at their work in parchments, papers, books, and volumes of which certain fragments had remained upon his gray beard. In honor of and reverence for his great virtue and wisdom, and his modest life, he was accompanied by a troop of black rats, all bringing with them pretty little mice, their sweethearts, for, not having adopted the canons of the council of Chesil, it was lawful for them to have respectable women for concubines. These beneficed rats being arranged in two lines, you might have fancied them a procession of the university authorities going to Lendit.

“And they all began to sniff the victuals.

“When the ceremony of placing them all was complete, the old cardinal of the rats lifted up his voice, and in a good rat-latin oration pointed out to the guardian of the grain that no one but God was superior to him; and that to God alone

he owed obedience, and he entertained him with many fine phrases, stuffed with evangelical quotations, to disturb the principal and fog his flock; in fact, fine arguments interlarded with much sound sense. The discourse finished with a peroration full of high-sounding words in honor of shrew-mice, among whom his hearer was the most illustrious and best beneath the sun; and this oration considerably bewildered the keeper of the granaries.

“This good gentleman’s head was thoroughly turned, and he installed this fine-speaking rat and his tribe in his manor, where night and day his praises and little songs in his honor were sung, not forgetting his lady, whose little paw was kissed and little tail was sniffed at by them all. Finally the mistress, knowing that certain young rats were still fasting, determined to finish her work. Then she kissed her lord tenderly, loading him with love, and performing those little endearing antics of which one alone was sufficient to send a beast to perdition; and said to the shrew-mouse that he wasted the precious time due to their love by traveling about, that he was always going here or there, and that she never had her proper share of him; that when she wanted his society he was either on the leads or chasing the cats, and that she wished him always to be ready to her hand like a lance, and kind as a bird.

“Then in her great grief she tore out a gray hair, declaring herself, weepingly, to be the most wretched little mouse in the world. The shrew-mouse pointed out to her that she was mistress of everything, and wished to resist, but after the lady had shed a torrent of tears he implored a truce and considered her request. Then instantly drying her tears, and giving him her paw to kiss, she advised him to arm some soldiers, trusty and tried rats, old warriors, who would go the rounds and keep watch.

“Everything was thus wisely arranged. The shrew-mouse had the rest of the day to dance, play, and amuse himself,

listen to the roundelays and ballads which the poets composed in his honor, play the lute and the mandore, make acrostics, eat, drink, and be merry. One day his mistress having just risen from her confinement, after having given birth to the sweetest little mouse-sorex or sorex-mouse, I know not what name was given to this mongrel fruit of love, whom you may be sure the gentleman of the long robe would manage to legitimize" (the constable of Montmorency, who had married his son to a legitimized bastard of the King's, here put his hand to his sword and clutched the hilt fiercely), "a grand feast was given in the granaries, to which no Court festival or gala can be compared, not even that of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. In every corner mice were making merry. Everywhere there were dances, concerts, banquets, sarabands, music, joyous songs, and epithalamia. The rats had broken open the pots, uncovered the jars, lapped the gallipots, and unpacked the stores. The mustard was strewn over the place, the hams were mangled and the corn scattered. Everything was rolling, tumbling, and falling about the floor, and the little rats dabbled in puddles of green sauce, the mice navigated oceans of sweetmeats, and the old folk carried off the pasties. There were mice astride on salt tongues. Field-mice were swimming in the pots, and the most cunning of them were carrying the corn into their private holes, profiting by the confusion to make ample provision for themselves. No one passed the quince confection of Orleans without saluting it with one nibble, and oftener with two. It was like a Roman carnival. In short, any one with a sharp ear might have heard the frizzling frying-pans, the cries and clamors of the kitchens, the crackling of the furnaces, the noise of turnspits, the creaking of baskets, the haste of the confectioners, the click of the meat-jacks, and the noise of the little feet scampering thick as hail over the floor. It was a bustling wedding-feast, where people come and go, footmen, stablemen, cooks, musicians, buffoons, where every one pays compliments and makes a

noise. In short, so great was the delight that they all kept up a general wagging of the head to celebrate this eventful night.

"But suddenly there was heard the horrible foot-fall of Gargantua, who was ascending the stairs of his house to visit the granaries, and made the planks, the beams, and everything else tremble. Certain old rats asked each other what might mean this seignorial footstep, with which they were unacquainted, and some of them decamped; and they did well, for the lord and master entered suddenly. Perceiving the confusion these gentlemen had made, seeing his preserves eaten, his mustard unpacked, and everything dirtied and scratched about, he put his feet upon these lively vermin without giving them time to squeak, and thus spoiled their best clothes, satins, pearls, velvets, and rubbish, and upset the feast."

"And what became of the shrew-mouse?" said the King, waking from his reverie.

"Ah, Sire!" replied Rabelais, "herein we see the injustice of the Gargantuan tribe. He was put to death, but being a gentleman he was beheaded. That was ill done, for he had been betrayed."

"You go rather far, my good man," said the King.

"No, Sire," replied Rabelais, "but rather high. Have you not sunk the crown beneath the pulpit? You asked me for a sermon; I have given you one which is gospel."

"My fine vicar," said Madame Diane in his ear, "suppose I were spiteful?"

"Madame," said Rabelais, "was it not well then of me to warn the King, your master, against the Queen's Italians, who are as plentiful here as cockchafers?"

"Poor preacher," said Cardinal Odet, in his ear, "go to another country."

"Ah, monsieur," replied the old fellow, "ere long I shall be in another land."

“God’s truth ! Mr. Scribbler,” said the constable (whose son, as every one knows, had treacherously deserted Made-moiselle de Piennes, to whom he was betrothed, to espouse Diane of France, daughter of the mistress of certain high personages and of the King), “who made thee so bold as to slander persons of quality ? Ah, wretched poet, you like to raise yourself high ; well, then, I promise to put you in a good high place.”

“We shall all go there, my lord constable,” replied the old man ; “but if you are friendly to the State and to the King, you will thank me for having warned him against the hordes of Lorraine, who are evils that will devour every-thing.”

“My good man,” whispered Cardinal Charles of Lorraine, “if you need a few gold crowns to publish your fifth book of Pantagruel you can come to me for them, because you have put the case clearly to this enemy, who has bewitched the King, and also to her pack.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said the King, “what do you think of the sermon ?”

“Sire,” said Mellin de Saint-Gelais, seeing that all were well pleased, “I have never heard a better pantagruelian prognostication. Much do we owe to him who made these leonine verses in the abbey of Theleme :

‘ Cy vous *entrez*, qui le saint Evangile
En sens *agile* annoncez, quoy qu’on gronde,
Céans *aurez* une refuge et bastille
Contre l’*hostile* erreur qui tant postille
Par son faux *style* empoisonner le monde.’ ”

All the courtiers having applauded their companion, each one complimented Rabelais, who took his departure accompanied with great honor by the King’s pages, who, by express command, held torches before him.

Some persons have charged Francis Rabelais, the imperial

honor of our land, with spiteful tricks and apish pranks, unworthy of his Homeric philosophy, of this prince of wisdom, of this fatherly centre, from which have issued since the rising of his subterranean light a good number of marvelous works. Out upon those who would defile this divine head! All their life long may they find grit between their teeth, those who have ignored his good and moderate nourishment.

Dear drinker of pure water, faithful servant of monachal abstinence, wisest of wise men, how would thy sides ache with laughter, how wouldst thou chuckle, if thou couldst come again for a little while to Chinon, and read the idiotic mouthings and the maniacal babble of the fools who have interpreted, commentated, torn, disgraced, misunderstood, betrayed, defiled, adulterated, and meddled with thy peerless book. As many dogs as Panurge found busy with his lady's robe at church, so many two-legged academic puppies have busied themselves with befouling the high marble pyramid in which is cemented forever the seed of all fantastic and funny inventions, beside magnificent instruction in all things.

Although rare are the pilgrims who have the breath to follow thy bark in its sublime peregrinations through the ocean of ideas, methods, varieties, religions, wisdom, and human trickeries, at least their worship is unalloyed, pure, and unadulterated, and thine omnipotence, omniscience, and omnilinguage are by them bravely recognized. Therefore has a poor son of our merry Touraine here been anxious, however unworthily, to do thee homage by magnifying thine image, and glorifying thy works of eternal memory, so cherished by those who love the concentrative works wherein the universal moral is contained, wherein are found, pressed like fresh sardines in their boxes, philosophical ideas on every subject, science, art, and eloquence as well as theatrical mummeries.

DESPAIR IN LOVE.

At the time when King Charles the Eighth took it into his head to decorate the Castle of Amboise, there came with him certain workmen, master-sculptors, good painters, and masons, or architects, who ornamented the galleries with splendid work, which, through neglect, have since been much spoiled.

At that time the Court was staying in this beautiful locality, and, as every one knows, the King took great pleasure in watching his people work out their ideas. Among these foreign gentlemen was an Italian, named Angelo Cappara, a most worthy young man, and, in spite of his age, a better sculptor and engraver than any of them; and it astonished many to see one in the April of his life so clever. Indeed, there had scarcely sprouted upon his visage the hair which imprints upon a man virile majesty. To this Angelo the ladies took a great fancy, because he was charming as a dream, and as melancholy as a dove left solitary in its nest by the death of its mate.

And this was the reason thereof: this sculptor knew the curse of poverty, which mars and troubles all the actions of life; he lived miserably, eating little, ashamed of his pennilessness, and made use of his talents only through great despair, wishing by any means to win that idle life which is the best of all for those whose minds are occupied. The Florentine, out of bravado, came to the Court gallantly attired, and from the timidity of youth and misfortune dared not to ask his money from the King, who, seeing him thus dressed, believed him well furnished with everything. The courtiers and the ladies used all to admire his beautiful works, and also their author; but of money he got none. All, and the ladies above all, finding him rich by nature, esteemed him well off with his youth, his long, black hair and bright eyes, and did not give a

thought to lucre, while thinking of these things and the rest. Indeed, they were quite right, since these advantages gave to many a rascal of the Court lands, money, and all. In spite of his youthful appearance, Master Angelo was twenty years of age, and no fool, had a large heart, a head full of poetry; and more than that, was a man of lofty imaginings. But although he had little confidence in himself, like all poor and unfortunate people, he was astonished at the success of the ignorant.

He fancied that he was ill-fashioned, either in body or mind, and kept his thoughts to himself. I am wrong, for he told them in the clear starlight nights to the shadows, to God, to the devil, and everything about him. At such times he would lament his fate in having a heart so warm, that doubtless the ladies avoided him as they would a red-hot iron; then he would say to himself how he would worship a beautiful mistress, how all his life long he would honor her, with what fidelity he would attach himself to her, with what affection serve her, how studiously obey her commands, with what sports he would dispel the light clouds of her melancholy sadness on the days when the sky should be overcast.

Fashioning himself one out of his imagination, he would throw himself at her feet, kiss, fondle, caress, bite, and clasp her with as much reality as a prisoner scampers over the grass when he sees the green fields through the bars of his cell. Thus he would appeal to her mercy; overcome with his feelings would stop her breath with his embraces, would become daring in spite of his respect, and passionately bite the clothes of his bed, seeking this celestial lady, full of courage when by himself, but abashed on the morrow if he passed one by. Nevertheless, inflamed by these amorous fancies, he would hammer away anew at his marble figures, would carve beautiful breasts to bring the water to one's mouth at the sight of these sweet fruits of love, without counting the other things that he raised, carved, and caressed with his chisels, smoothed

down with his file, and fashioned in a manner that would make their use intelligible to the mind of a greenhorn, and stain his verdure in a single day. The ladies would criticise these beauties, and all of them were smitten with the youthful Cappara. And the youthful Cappara would eye them up and down, swearing that the day one of them gave him her little finger to kiss, he would have his desire.

Among these high-born ladies there came one day one by herself to the young Florentine, asking him why he was so shy, and if none of the Court ladies could make him sociable. Then she graciously invited him to come to her house that evening.

Master Angelo perfumes himself, purchases a velvet mantle with a double fringe of satin, borrows from a friend a cloak with wide sleeves, a slashed doublet, and silken hose, arrives at the house, and ascends the stairs with hasty feet, hope beaming from his eyes, knowing not what to do with his heart, which leaped and bounded like a goat ; and, to sum up, so much over head and ears in love, that the perspiration trickled down his back.

You may be sure the lady was beautiful, and Master Cappara was the more aware of it, since in his profession he had studied the mouldings of the arms, the lines of the body, the secret surroundings of the sex, and other mysteries. Now this lady satisfied the especial rules of art ; and beside being fair and slender, she had a voice to disturb life in its source, to stir the fire of heart, brain, and everything ; in short, she put into one's imagination delicious images of love without thinking of it, which is the characteristic of these cursed women.

The sculptor found her seated by the fire in a high chair, and the lady immediately commenced to converse at her ease, though Angelo could find no other reply than " Yes " and " No," could get no other words from his throat nor idea in his brain, and would have beaten his head against the fire-

place but for the happiness of gazing at and listening to his lovely mistress, who was playing there with a young fly in a ray of sunshine. Because, with this mute admiration, both remained until the middle of the night, wandering slowly down the flowery path of love, the good sculptor went away radiant with happiness. On the road, he concluded in his own mind that, if a noble lady kept him rather close to her skirts during four hours of the night, it would not matter a straw if she kept him there the remainder. Drawing from these premises certain sweet corollaries, he resolved to ask her favors as a simple woman. Then he determined to kill everybody—the husband, the wife, or himself—rather than lose the distaff whereon to spin one hour of joy. Indeed, he was so mad with love that he believed life to be but a small stake in the game of love, since one single day of it was worth a thousand lives.

The Florentine chiseled away at his statues, thinking of his evening, and thus spoiled many a nose thinking of something else. Noticing this, he left his work, perfumed himself, and went to listen to the sweet words of his lady, with the hope of turning them into deeds; but when he was in the presence of his sovereign, her feminine majesty made itself felt, and poor Cappara, such a lion in the street, looked sheepish when gazing at his victim. This notwithstanding, toward the hour when desire becomes heated, he was almost in the lady's lap and held her tightly clasped. He had obtained a kiss, had taken it, much to his delight; for, when they give it, the ladies retain the right of refusal, but when they let it be taken, the lover may take a thousand. This is the reason why all of them are accustomed to let it be taken.

The Florentine had stolen a good number, and things were going on admirably, when the lady, who had been thrifty with her favors, cried:

“My husband!”

And, in fact, my lord had just returned from playing

tennis, and the sculptor had to leave the place, but not without receiving a warm glance from the lady interrupted in her pleasure. This was all his substance, pittance, and enjoyment during a whole month, since on the brink of his joy always came the said husband, and he always arrived wisely between a point-blank refusal and those little caresses with which women always season their refusals—little things which reanimate love and render it all the stronger. And when the sculptor, out of patience, commenced, immediately upon his arrival, the skirmish of the skirt, in order that victory might arrive before the husband, to whom, no doubt, these disturbances were not without profit, his fine lady, seeing desire written in the eyes of her sculptor, commenced endless quarrels and altercations: at first she pretended to be jealous, in order to rail against love; then appeased the anger of the little one with the moisture of a kiss, then kept the conversation to herself, and kept on saying that her lover should be good, obedient to her will, otherwise she would not yield to him her life and soul; that a desire was a small thing to offer a mistress; that she was more courageous, because loving more she sacrificed more, and to his propositions she would exclaim, “Silence, sir!” with the air of a queen, and at times she would put on an angry look, to reply to the reproaches of Cappara:

“If you are not as I wish you to be, I will no longer love you.”

The poor Italian saw, when it was too late, that this was not a noble love, one of those which does not mete out joy as a miser his crowns; and that this lady took delight in letting him jump about outside the hedge and be master of everything, provided he touched not the garden of love. At this business Cappara became savage enough to kill any one, and took with him trusty companions, his friends, to whom he gave the task of attacking the husband while walking home to bed after his game of tennis with the King. He came to this

lady at the accustomed hour when the 'sweet sports of love were in full swing, which sports were long, lasting kisses, hair twisted and untwisted, hands bitten with passion, ears as well; indeed, the whole business, with the exception of that especial thing which good authors rightly find abominable.

The Florentine exclaims between the smacks of two unusually hearty kisses:

"Sweet one, do you love me more than anything?"

"Yes," said she, because words never cost anything.

"Well, then," replied the lover, "be mine in deed as in word."

"But," said she, "my husband will be here directly."

"Is that the only reason?" said he.

"Yes."

"I have friends who will cross him, and will not let him go unless I show a torch at this window. If he complain to the King, my friends will say they thought they were playing a joke on one of their own set."

"Ah, my dear," said she, "let me see if every one in the house is gone to bed."

She rose, and held the light to the window. Seeing which Cappara blew out the candle, seized his sword, and placed himself in front of this woman, whose scorn and evil mind he recognized.

"I will not kill you, madame," said he, "but I will mark your face in such a manner that you will never again coquette with young lovers whose lives you waste. You have deceived me shamefully and are not a respectable woman. You must know that a kiss will never sustain life in a true lover, and that a kissed mouth needs the rest. You have made my life forever dull and wretched; now I will make you remember forever my death, which you have caused. You shall never again behold yourself in the glass without seeing there my face also."

Then he raised his arm, and held the sword ready to cut

off a good slice of the fresh fair cheek, where still the traces of his kiss remained.

And the lady exclaimed: "You wretch!"

"Hold your tongue," said he; "you told me that you loved me better than everything. Now you say otherwise; each evening have you raised me a little nearer to heaven; with one blow you cast me into hell; and do you think that your petticoat can save you from a lover's wrath? No!"

"Ah, my Angelo! I am thine," said she, marveling at this man glaring with rage.

But he, stepping three paces back, replied: "Ah, woman of the Court and wicked heart, thou lovest, then, thy face better than thy lover."

She turned pale, and humbly held up her face, for she understood that at this moment her past perfidy wronged her present love. With a single blow Angelo slashed her face, then left her house, and quitted the country. The husband not having been stopped by reason of that light which was seen by the Florentines, found his wife minus her left cheek. But she spake not a word in spite of her agony; she loved her Cappara more than life itself. Nevertheless, the husband wished to know whence proceeded this wound. No one having been there except the Florentine, he complained to the King, who had his workman hastily pursued, and ordered him to be hanged at Blois. On the day of execution a noble lady was seized with a desire to save this courageous man, whom she believed to be a lover of the right sort. She begged the King to give him to her, which he did willingly. But Cappara, declaring that he belonged entirely to this lady, the memory of whom he could not banish entirely, entered the church, became a cardinal and a great savant, and used to say in his old age that he had existed upon the remembrance of the joys tasted in those poor hours of anguish; in which he was, at the same time, both very well and very badly treated by his lady. There are

authors who say that afterward he succeeded better with his old sweetheart, whose cheek healed ; but I cannot believe this, because he was a man of heart, who had a high opinion of the holy joys of love.

This teaches us nothing worth knowing, unless it be that there are unlucky meetings in life, since this tale is in every way true. If in other places the author has overshot the truth, this one will gain for him the indulgence of the conclave of lovers.



PERSEVERANCE IN LOVE.

DURING the first years of the thirteenth century after the coming of our Divine Saviour there happened in the city of Paris an amorous adventure, through the deed of a man of Tours, of which the town and even the King's Court were never tired of speaking. As to the clergy, you will see by that which is related below the part they played in this history, the testimony of which was by them preserved. This said man, called the Tourangeau by the common people, because he had been born in our merry Touraine, had for his true name that of Anseau. In his latter days the good man returned into his own country and was mayor of St. Martin, according to the chronicles of the abbey of that town; but at Paris he was a great silversmith. But now in his prime, by his great honesty, his labors, and so forth, he became a citizen of Paris and subject to the King, whose protection he bought, according to the custom of the period. He had a house built for him free of all quit-rent, close to the church of St. Leu, in the Rue St. Denis, where his forge was well known by those in want of fine jewelry. Although he was a Tourangeau, and had plenty of spirit and animation, he kept himself virtuous as a true saint, in spite of the blandishments of the city, and had passed the days of his green season without once dragging his good name through the mire.

Many will say this passes the bounds of that faculty of belief which God has placed in us to aid that faith due to the mysteries of our holy religion; so it is needful to demonstrate abundantly the secret cause of this silversmith's chastity.

And, first, remember that he came into the town on foot, poor as Job, according to the old saying; and, like all the inhabitants of our part of the country, who have but one passion, he had a character of iron, and persevered in the

path he had chosen as steadily as a monk in vengeance. As a workman, he labored from morn to night ; become a master, he labored still, always learning new secrets, seeking new recipes, and, in seeking, meeting with inventions of all kinds. Late idlers, watchmen, and vagrants saw always a modest lamp shining through the silversmith's window, and the good man tapping, sculpting, rounding, chiseling, modeling, and finishing, with his apprentices, his door closed and his ears open. Poverty engendered hard work, hard work engendered his wonderful virtue, and his virtue engendered his great wealth. Take this to heart, ye children of Cain, who eat doubloons and micturate water.

If the good silversmith felt himself possessed with wild desires, which now in one way, now in another, seize upon an unhappy bachelor when the devil tries to get hold on him, making the sign of the cross, the Tourangeau hammered away at his metal, drove out the rebellious spirits from his brain, by bending down over the exquisite works of art, little engravings, figures of gold and silver forms, with which he appeased the anger of his Venus. Add to this that this Tourangeau was an artless man, of simple understanding, fearing God above all things, then robbers, next to that the nobles, and more than all, a disturbance. Although he had two hands, he never did more than one thing at a time. His voice was as gentle as that of a bridegroom before marriage. Although the clergy, the military, and others gave him no reputation for knowledge, he knew well his mother's Latin, and spoke it correctly without waiting to be asked.

Latterly the Parisians had taught him to walk uprightly, not to be at the bush for others, to measure his passions by the rule of his revenues, not to let them take *his* leather to make others' shoes, to trust no one farther than he could see them, never to say what he did, and always do what he said ; never to spill anything but water ; to have a better memory than flies usually have ; to keep his hands to himself, to do the same

with his purse ; to avoid a crowd at the corner of a street, and sell his jewels for more than they cost him ; all things, the sage observance of which gave him as much wisdom as he had need of to do business comfortably and pleasantly. And so he did, without troubling any one else. And watching this good little man unobserved, many said :

“ By my faith, I should like to be this jeweler, even were I obliged to splash myself up to the eyes with the mud of Paris during a hundred years for it.”

They might just as well have wished to be King of France, seeing that the silversmith had great, powerful, nervous arms, so wonderfully strong that when he closed his fist the cleverest trick of the roughest fellow could not open it ; from which you may be sure that whatever he got hold of he stuck to. More than this, he had teeth fit to masticate iron, a stomach to dissolve it, a duodenum to digest it, a sphincter to let it out again without tearing, and shoulders that would bear a universe upon them, like that pagan gentleman to whom the job was confided, and whom the timely coming of Jesus Christ discharged from the duty. He was, in fact, a man made with one stroke, and they are the best, for those who have to be touched up are worth nothing, being patched up and finished at odd times. In short, Master Anseau was a thorough man, with a lion's face, and under his eyebrows a glance that would melt his gold if the fire of his forge had gone out, but a limpid water placed in his eyes by the great Moderator of all things tempered this great ardor, without which he would have burnt up everything. Was he not a splendid specimen of a man ?

With such a sample of his cardinal virtues, some persist in asking why the good silversmith remained as unmarried as an oyster, seeing that these properties of nature are of good use in all places. But these opinionated critics, do they know what it is to love ? Ho ! ho ! Easy ! The vocation of a lover is to go, to come, to listen, to watch, to hold his tongue,

to talk, to stick in a corner, to make himself big, to make himself little, to agree, to play music, to drudge, to go to the devil wherever he be, to count the gray peas in the dovecot, to find flowers under the snow, to say *paternosters* to the moon, to stroke the cat and pat the dog, to salute his friends, to flatter the gout or the cold of the aunt, to say to her at opportune moments: "You have good looks, and will yet write the epitaph of the human race." To please all the relations, to tread on no one's corns, to break no glasses, to waste no breath, to talk nonsense, to hold ice in his hand, to say:

"This is good!" or, "Really, madame, you are very beautiful so."

And to vary that in a hundred different ways. To keep himself cool, to bear himself like a nobleman, to have a free tongue and a modest one, to endure with a smile all the evils the devil may invent on his behalf, to smother his anger, to hold nature in control, to have the finger of God and the tail of the devil, to reward the mother, the cousin, the servant; in fact, to put a good face on everything. In default of which the female escapes and leaves you in a fix, without giving a single Christian reason. In fact, the lover of the most gentle maid that God ever created in a good-tempered moment, had he talked like a book, jumped like a flea, turned about like dice, played like King David, and built for the aforesaid woman the Corinthian order of the columns of the devil, if he failed in the essential and hidden thing which pleases his lady above all others, which often she does not know herself and which he has need to know, the lass leaves him like a red leper. She is quite right. No one can blame her for so doing.

When this happens some men become ill-tempered, cross, and more wretched than you can possibly imagine. Have not many of them killed themselves through this petticoat tyranny? In this matter the man distinguishes himself from

the beast, seeing that no animal ever yet lost his senses through blighted love, which proves abundantly that animals have no souls. The employment of a lover is that of a mountebank, of a soldier, of a quack, of a buffoon, of a prince, of a ninny, of a King, of an idler, of a monk, of a dupe, of a blackguard, of a liar, of a braggart, of a sycophant, of a numskull, of a frivolous fool, of a blockhead, of a know-nothing, of a knave. An employment from which Jesus abstained, in imitation of whom folk of great understanding likewise disdain it; it is a vocation in which a man of worth is required to spend, above all things, his time, his life, his blood, his best words, beside his heart, his soul, and his brain; things to which the women are cruelly partial, because, directly their tongues begin to go, they say among themselves that if they have not the whole of a man they have none of him.

Be sure, also, that there are cats who, knitting their eyebrows, complain that a man does but a hundred things for them, for the purpose of finding out if there be a hundred, and first seeing that in everything they desire the most thorough spirit of conquest and tyranny. And this high jurisprudence has always flourished among the customs of Paris, where the women receive more wit at their baptism than in any other place in the world, and thus are mischievous by birth.

But our silversmith, always busy at his work, burnishing gold and melting silver, had no time to warm his love or to burnish and make shine his fantasies, nor to show off, gad about, waste his time in mischief, or to run after shemales.

Now seeing that in Paris virgins do not fall into the beds of young men any more than roast pheasants into the streets, not even when the young men are royal silversmiths, the Tourangeau had the advantage of having, as I have before observed, a continent member in his shirt. However, the goodman could not close his eyes to the advantages of nature with which were so amply furnished the ladies with whom he dilated upon the value of his jewels. So it was

that, after listening to the gentle discourse of the ladies, who tried to wheedle and to fondle him to obtain a favor from him, the good Tourangeau would return to his home, dreamy as a poet, wretched as a restless cuckoo, and would say to himself:

“I must take to myself a wife. She would keep the house tidy, keep the plates hot for me, fold the clothes for me, sew my buttons on, sing merrily about the house, tease me to do everything according to her taste, would say to me, as they all say to their husbands when they want a jewel: ‘Oh, my pet, look at this, is it not pretty?’ And every one in the quarter will think of my wife, and then of me, and say: ‘There’s a happy man.’”

“Then the getting married, the bridal festivities, to fondle Madame Silversmith, to dress her superbly, give her a fine gold chain, to worship her from crown to toe, to give her the whole management of the house, except the cash, to give her a nice little room upstairs, with good windows, pretty, and hung round with tapestry, with a wonderful chest in it and a fine large bed, with twisted columns and curtains of yellow silk. He would buy her beautiful mirrors, and there would always be a dozen or so of children, his and hers, when he came home, to greet him.”

Then wife and children would vanish into the clouds. He transferred his melancholy imaginings to fantastic designs, fashioned his amorous thoughts into grotesque jewels that pleased their buyers well, they knowing not how many wives and children were lost in the productions of the good man, who, the more talent he threw into his art, the more disordered he became.

Now if God had not had pity upon him, he would have quitted this world without knowing what love was, but would have known it in the other without that metamorphosis of the flesh which spares it, according to Monsieur Plato, a man of some authority, but who, not being a Christian, was wrong. But, there! these preparatory digressions are the idle digressions

and fastidious commentaries which certain unbelievers compel a man to wind about a tale like swaddling-clothes about an infant when it should run about stark naked. May the great devil give them a clyster with his red-hot, three-pronged fork. I am going on with my story now without further circumlocution.

This is what happened to the silversmith in the one-and-fortieth year of his age :

One Sabbath-day, while walking on the left bank of the Seine, led by an idle fancy, he ventured as far as that meadow which has since been called the *Pré-aux-Clercs*, and which at that time was in the domain of the abbey of Saint-Germain, and not in that of the university. There, still strolling on, the Tourangeau found himself in the open fields, and there met a poor young girl who, seeing that he was well dressed, curtsied to him, saying :

“ Heaven preserve you, monseigneur.”

In saying this her voice had such sympathetic sweetness that the silversmith felt his soul ravished by this feminine melody, and conceived an affection for the girl, the more so as, tormented with ideas of marriage as he was, everything was favorable thereto. Nevertheless, as he had passed the wench by he dared not go back, because he was as timid as a young maid who would die in her petticoats rather than raise them for her pleasure. But when he was a bow-shot off he bethought him that he was a man who for ten years had been a master-silversmith, had become a citizen, and was a man of mark, and could look a woman in the face if his fancy so led him, the more so as his imagination had great power over him. So he turned suddenly back, as if he had changed the direction of his stroll, and came upon the girl, who held by an old cord her poor cow, who was munching the grass that had grown on the border of a ditch at the side of the road.

“ Ah, my pretty one,” said he, “ you are not overburdened with the goods of this world that you thus work with your

hands upon the Lord's day. Are you not afraid of being cast into prison?"

"Monseigneur," replied the maid, casting down her eyes, "I have nothing to fear, because I belong to the abbey. The lord abbot has given me leave to exercise the cow after vespers."

"You love your cow, then, more than the salvation of your soul?"

"Ah, monseigneur, our beast is almost the half of our poor lives."

"I am astonished, my girl, to see you poor and in rags, clothed like a fagot, running barefoot upon the fields on the Sabbath, when you carry about you more treasures than you could dig up in the grounds of the abbey. Do not the town-people pursue you and torment you with love?"

"Oh, never, monseigneur. I belong to the abbey," replied she, showing the jeweler a collar on the left arm like those that the beasts of the field have, but without the little bell, and at the same time casting such a deplorable glance at our townsman that he was stricken quite sad, for by the eyes are communicated contagions of the heart when they are strong.

"And what does this mean?" he said, wishing to hear all about it.

And he touched the collar, upon which was engraved the arms of the abbey very distinctly, but which he did not wish to see.

"Monseigneur, I am the daughter of an *homme de corps* (bondservant); thus, whoever unites himself to me by marriage will become a bondsman, even if he were a citizen of Paris, and would belong body and goods to the abbey. If he embraced me otherwise, his children would still belong to the domain. For this reason I am neglected by every one, abandoned like a poor beast of the field. But what makes me most unhappy is that, according to the pleasure of Monseig-

neur the Abbot, I shall be coupled at some time with a bondsman. And if I were less ugly than I am, at the sight of my collar the most amorous would flee from me as from the black plague."

So saying, she pulled her cow by the cord to make it follow her.

"And how old are you?" asked the silversmith.

"I do not know, monseigneur; but our master, the abbot, has kept account."

This great misery touched the heart of the good man, who had in his day eaten the bread of sorrow. He regulated his pace to the girl's, and they went together toward the water in painful silence. The good man gazed at the fine forehead, the round red arms, the queen's waist, the feet dusty, but made like those of a Virgin Mary; and the sweet physiognomy of this girl, who was the living image of St. Geneviève, the patroness of Paris, and the maidens who live in the fields.

And make sure that this Joseph suspected the pretty white of the sweet girl's breasts, which were by a modest grace carefully covered with an old rag, and looked at them as a schoolboy looks at a rosy apple on a hot day. Also, may you depend upon it that these little hillocks of nature denoted a wench fashioned with delicious perfection, like everything the monks possess. Now, the more it was forbidden our silversmith to touch them, the more his mouth watered for these fruits of love. And his heart leaped almost into his mouth.

"You have a fine cow," said he.

"Would you like a little milk?" replied she. "It is so warm these early days of May. You are far from the town."

In truth, the sky was a cloudless blue, and glared like a forge. Everything was radiant with youth, the leaves, the air, the girls, the lads; everything was burning, was green, and smelt like balm. This naïve offer, made without the hope of recompense, though a byzant would not have paid for the special grace of the speech, and the modesty of the gesture with which

the poor girl turned to him, gained the heart of the jeweler, who would have liked to be able to put this bondswoman into the skin of a queen, and with Paris at her feet.

"Nay, my child, I thirst not for milk, but for you, whom I would have leave to liberate."

"That cannot be and I shall die the property of the abbey. For years we have lived so, from father to son, from mother to daughter. Like my poor ancestors, I shall pass my days on this land, as will also my children, because the abbot cannot legally let us go."

"What!" said the Tourangeau; "has no gallant been tempted by your bright eyes to buy your liberty, as I bought mine from the King?"

"It would cost too dear; thus it is those whom at first sight I please, go as they came."

"And you have never thought of gaining another country in company with a lover on horseback on a fleet courser?"

"Oh, yes. But, monseigneur, if I were caught I should be hanged at least; and my gallant, even were he a lord, would lose more than one domain over it, beside other things. I am not worth so much; beside, the abbey has arms longer than my feet are swift. So I live on in perfect obedience to God, who has placed me in this plight."

"What is your father?"

"He tends the vines in the gardens of the abbey."

"And your mother?"

"She is a washerwoman."

"And what is your name?"

"I have no name, dear sir. My father was baptized Étienne, my mother is Ètienne, and I am Tiennette, at your service."

"Sweetheart," said the jeweler, "never has woman pleased me as you please me; and I believe that your heart contains a wealth of goodness. Now, since you offered yourself to my eyes at the moment when I was firmly deliberating upon taking

a companion, I believe that I see in you a sign from heaven ! and if I am not displeasing to you, I beg you to accept me as your friend."

Immediately the maid lowered her eyes. These words were uttered in such a way, in so grave a tone, so penetrating a manner, that the said Tiennette burst into tears.

"No, monseigneur, I should be the cause of a thousand unpleasantnesses, and of your misfortune. For a poor bondsmaid, the conversation has gone far enough."

"Ho !" cried Anseau ; "you do not know, my child, the man you are dealing with."

The Tourangeau crossed himself, joined his hands, and said :

"I make a vow to monsieur the Saint-Eloi, under whose invocation are the silversmiths, to fashion two images of pure silver, with the best workmanship I am able to perform. One shall be a statue of madame the Virgin, to this end, to thank her for the liberty of my dear wife ; and the other for my said patron, if I am successful in my undertaking to liberate the bondswoman Tiennette here present, and for which I rely upon his assistance. Moreover, I swear by my eternal salvation to persevere with courage in this affair, to spend therein all I possess, and only to quit it with my life. God has heard me," said he.

"And you, little one," he added, turning inquiringly toward the maid.

"Ha ! monseigneur, look ! My cow is running about the fields," cried she, sobbing at the good man's knees. "I will love you all my life ; but withdraw your vow."

"Let us look after the cow," said the silversmith, raising her, without daring yet to kiss her, although the maid was well disposed to it.

"Yes," said she, "for I shall be beaten."

And behold now the silversmith, scampering after the cursed cow, who gave no heed to their amours ; she was taken by the

horns, and held in the grip of the Tourangeau, who for a trifle could have thrown her in the air, like a straw.

“Adieu, my sweet one ! If you go into the town, come to my house, over against Saint-Leu’s Church. I am called Master Anseau, and am silversmith to the King of France, at the sign of Saint-Eloi. Make me a promise to be in this field the next Lord’s day ; fail not to come, even should it rain halberds.”

“Yes, dear sir. For this would I leap the walls, and, in gratitude, would I be yours without mischief, and cause you no sorrow, at the price of my everlasting future. Awaiting the happy moment, I will pray God for you with all my heart.”

And then she remained standing like a stone saint, moving not, until she could see the good citizen no longer, and he went away with lagging steps, turning from time to time toward her to gaze upon her. And when he was afar off, and out of her sight, she stayed on, until nightfall, lost in meditation, knowing not if she had dreamed that which had happened to her. Then went she back to the house, where she was beaten for staying out, but felt not the blows.

The good silversmith could neither eat nor drink, but closed his workshop, possessed of this girl, thinking of nothing but this girl, seeing everywhere this girl ; everything to him being to possess this girl.

Now, when the morrow was come, went he with great apprehension toward the abbey to speak to the lord abbot. On the road, however, he suddenly thought of putting himself under the protection of one of the King’s people, and with this idea returned to the Court, which was then held in the town. Being esteemed by all for his prudence, and loved for his pretty works and kindnesses, the King’s chamberlain—for whom he had once made, for a present to a lady of the Court, a golden casket set with precious stones, and unique of its kind—promised him assistance, had a horse saddled for him-

self and a hack for the silversmith, with whom he set out for the abbey, and asked to see the abbot, who was Monseigneur Hugon de Sennecterre, aged ninety-three. Being come into the room with the silversmith, waiting nervously to receive his sentence, the chamberlain begged the abbot to sell him in advance a thing which was easy for him to sell, and which would be pleasant to him.

To which the aged abbot replied, looking fixedly at the chamberlain :

“ That the canons inhibited and forbade him thus to engage his word.”

“ Behold, my dear father,” said the chamberlain, “ the jeweler of the court, who has conceived a great love for a bondswoman belonging to your abbey, and I request you, in consideration of my obliging you in any such desire as you may wish to see accomplished, to emancipate this maid.”

“ Which is she ? ” asked the abbot of the citizen.

“ Her name is Tiennette,” answered the silversmith, timidly.

“ Ho ! ho ! ” said the good old Hugon, smiling. “ The angler has caught us a good fish ! This is a grave business, and I know not how to decide by myself.”

“ I know, my father, what those words mean,” said the chamberlain, knitting his brow.

“ Fine sir,” said the abbot, “ know you what this maid is worth ? ”

The abbot ordered Tiennette to be fetched, telling his clerk to dress her in her finest clothes, and to make her look as nice as possible.

“ Your love is in danger,” said the chamberlain to the silversmith, pulling him on one side. “ Dismiss this fantasy. You can meet anywhere, even at Court, with women of wealth, young and pretty, who would willingly marry you. For this, if need there be, the King would assist you by giving you some title, which in the course of time would enable you to

found a good family. Are you sufficiently well furnished with crowns to become the founder of a noble line?"

"I know not, monseigneur," replied Anseau. "I have put money by."

"Then see if you cannot buy the manumission of this maid. I know the monks. With them money does everything."

"Monseigneur," said the silversmith to the abbot, coming toward him, "you have the charge and office of representing here below the goodness of God, who is often clement toward us, and has infinite treasures of mercy for our sorrows. Now, I will remember you each evening and each morning in my prayers, and never forget that I received my happiness at your hands, if you will aid me to gain this maid in lawful wedlock, without keeping in servitude the children born of this union. And for this I will make you a receptacle for the holy eucharist, so elaborate, so rich with gold, precious stones, and winged angels, that none other shall be like it in all Christendom. It shall remain unique, it shall dazzle your eyesight, and shall be so far the glory of your altar, that the people of the town and foreign nobles shall rush to see it, so magnificent shall it be."

"My son," replied the abbot, "have you lost your senses? If you are resolved to have this wench for a legal wife, your goods and your person belong to the chapter of the abbey."

"Yes, monseigneur, I am passionately in love with this girl, and more touched with her misery and her Christian heart than even with her perfections; but I am," said he, with tears in his eyes, "still more astonished at your harshness, and I say it although I well know that my fate is in your hands."

"Yes, monseigneur, I know the law; and if my goods fall to your domain, if I become a bondsman, if I lose my house and my citizenship, I will still keep that engine, gained by my labors and my studies, and which lies here," cried he,

striking his forehead, "in a place of which no one, save God, can be lord but myself. And your whole abbey could not pay for the special creations which proceed therefrom. You may have my body, my wife, my children, but nothing shall get you my engine; nay, not even torture, seeing that I am stronger than iron is hard, and more patient than sorrow is great."

So saying, the silversmith, enraged by the calmness of the abbot, who seemed resolved to acquire for the abbey the good man's doubloons, brought down his fist upon an oaken chair, and shattered it into fragments, for it split as under the blow of a mace.

"Behold, monseigneur, what kind of a servant you will have, and of an artificer of things divine you will make a mere cart-horse."

"My son," replied the abbot, "you have wrongfully broken my chair, and lightly judged my mind. This wench belongs to the abbey, and not to me. I am the faithful servant of the rights and customs of this glorious monastery; although I might grant this woman license to bear free children, I am responsible for this to God and to the abbey. Now, since there was here an altar, bondsmen, and monks, *id est*, from time immemorial, there has never occurred the case of a citizen becoming the property of the abbey by marriage with a bondswoman. Now, therefore, is there need to exercise the right, and to make use of it so that it be not lost, weakened, worn out, or fallen into disuse, which would occasion a thousand difficulties. And this is of a higher advantage to the State and to the abbey than your stones, however beautiful they be, seeing that we have treasure wherewith to buy rare jewels, and that no treasure can establish customs and laws. I call upon the King's chamberlain to bear witness to the infinite pains which his majesty takes every day to fight for the establishment of his orders."

"That is to close my mouth," said the chamberlain.

The silversmith, who was not a great scholar, remained thoughtful. Then came Tiennette, clean as a new pin, her hair raised up, dressed in a robe of white wool with a blue sash, with tiny shoes and white stockings; in fact, so royally beautiful, so noble in her bearing was she, that the silversmith was petrified with ecstasy, and the chamberlain confessed he had never seen so perfect a creature. Thinking there was too much danger in this sight for the poor jeweler, he led him into the town and begged him to think no further of the affair, since the abbey was not likely to liberate so good a bait for the citizens and nobles of the Parisian stream. In fact, the chapter let the poor lover know that if he married this girl he must resolve to yield up his goods and his house to the abbey, consider himself a bondsman, both he and the children of the aforesaid marriage; although, by a special grace, the abbot would let him his house on the condition of his giving an inventory of his furniture and paying a yearly rent, and coming during eight days to live in a shed adjoining the domain, in order to make it the service.

The silversmith, to whom every one spoke of the cupidity of the monks, saw clearly that the abbot would incommutably maintain this order, and his soul was filled with despair. At one time he determined to burn down the monastery; at another, he proposed to lure the abbot into a place where he could torment him until he had signed a charter for Tiennette's liberation; in fact, a thousand ideas possessed his brain, and as quickly evaporated. But after much lamentation he determined to carry off the girl, and fly with her into a sure place, from which nothing could draw him, and made his preparations accordingly; for, once out of the kingdom, his friends or the King could better tackle the monks and bring them to reason.

The good man counted, however, without his abbot, for going to the meadows, he found Tiennette no more there, and learned that she was confined in the abbey, and with

such rigor, that to get at her it would be necessary to lay siege to the monastery. Then Master Anseau passed his time in tears, complaints, and lamentations; and all the city, the townspeople, and the housewives talked of his adventure, the noise of which was so great that the King sent for the old abbot to court, and demanded of him why he did not yield under the circumstances to the great love of his silversmith, and why he did not put into practice Christian charity.

“Because, monseigneur,” replied the prince, “all rights are knit together like the pieces of a coat of mail, and if one makes default, all fail. If this girl were taken from us against our wish, and if the custom were not observed, your subjects would soon take off your crown, and raise up in various places violence and sedition, in order to abolish the taxes and imposts that weigh upon the populace.”

The King’s mouth was closed. Every one was eager to know the end of this adventure. So great was the curiosity that certain lords wagered that the Tourangeau would desist from his love, and the ladies wagered the contrary. The silversmith having complained to the Queen that the monks had hidden his well-beloved from his sight, she found the deed detestable and horrible; and in consequence of her commands to the lord abbot it was permitted to the Tourangeau to go every day into the parlor of the abbey, where came Tiennette, but under the control of an old monk, and she always came attired in great splendor like a lady. The two lovers had no other license than to see each other, and to speak to each other, without being able to snatch the smallest atom of pleasure, and always grew their love more powerful.

One day Tiennette discoursed thus with her lover :

“My dear lord, I have decided to make you a gift of my life, in order to relieve your suffering, and in this wise : in informing myself concerning everything I have found a means to set aside the rights of the abbey, and to give you all the joy you hope for from my fruition.

“The ecclesiastical judge has ruled that as you become a bondsman only by accession, and because you were not born a bondsman, your servitude will cease with the cause that made you a serf. Now, if you love me more than all else, lose your goods to purchase our happiness, and espouse me. Then when you have had your will of me, when you have hugged me and embraced me to your heart’s content, before I have offspring will I voluntarily kill myself, and thus you will become free again; at least, you will have the King on your side, who, it is said, wishes you well. And, without doubt, God will pardon me that I cause my own death, in order to deliver my lord spouse.”

“My dear Tiennette,” cried the jeweler, “it is finished—I will be a bondsman, and thou wilt live to make my happiness as long as my days. In thy company, the hardest chains will weigh but lightly, and little shall I reckon the want of gold, when all my riches are in thy heart, and my only pleasure in thy sweet body. I place myself in the hands of St. Eloi, who will deign in this misery to look upon us with pitying eyes, and guard us from all evils. Now I shall go hence to a scrivener to have the deeds and contracts drawn up. At least, dear flower of my days, thou shalt be gorgeously attired, well housed, and served like a queen during thy lifetime, since the lord abbot leaves me the earnings of my profession.”

Tiennette, crying and laughing, tried to put off her good fortune, and wished to die, rather than reduce to slavery a free man; but the good Anseau whispered such soft words to her, and threatened so firmly to follow her to the tomb, that she agreed to the said marriage, thinking that she could always free herself after having tasted the pleasures of love.

When the submission of the Tourangeau became known in the town, and that for his sweetheart he yielded up his wealth and his liberty, every one wished to see him. The ladies of the Court encumbered themselves with jewels, in order to speak with him, and there fell upon him, as from the clouds, women

enough to make up for the time he had been without them ; but if any of them approached Tiennette in beauty, none had her heart. To be brief, when the hour of slavery and love was at hand, Anseau moulded all his gold into a royal crown, in which he fixed all his pearls and diamonds, and went secretly to the Queen, and gave it to her, saying :

“Madame, I know not how to dispose of my fortune, which you here behold. To-morrow everything that is found in my house will be the property of the cursed monks, who have had no pity on me. Then deign, madame, to accept this. It is a slight return for the joy which, through you, I have experienced in seeing her I love ; for no sum of money is worth one of her glances. I do not know what will become of me, but if one day my children are delivered, I rely upon your queenly generosity.”

“Well said, good man,” cried the King. “The abbey may one day need my aid, and I will not lose the remembrance of this.”

There was a vast crowd at the abbey for the nuptials of Tiennette, to whom the Queen presented the bridal dress, and to whom the King granted a license to wear every day golden rings in her ears. When the charming pair came from the abbey to the house of Anseau (now the serf) over against St. Leu, there were torches at the windows to see them pass, and a double line in the streets, as though it were a royal entry. The poor husband had made himself a collar of gold, which he wore on his left arm in token of his belonging to the abbey of St. Germain. But in spite of his servitude the people cried out :

“Noël ! Noël !” * as to a new-crowned king. And the goodman bowed to them gracefully, happy as a lover, and joyful at the homage which every one rendered to the grace and modesty of Tiennette.

Then the good Tourangeau found green boughs and violets

* Good-tidings.

of crowns in his honor ; and the principal inhabitants of the quarter were all there, who, as a great honor, played music to him, and cried to him : “ You will always be a noble man in spite of the abbey.”

You may be sure that the happy pair indulged in amorous conflict to their heart’s content ; that the good man’s strokes were vigorous ; and that his sweetheart, like a good country maiden, was of a nature to return them. Thus they lived together a whole month, happy as the doves, who in spring-time build their nest twig by twig. Tiennette was delighted with the beautiful house and the customers, who came and went away astonished at her. This month of flowers passed, there came one day, with great pomp, the good old Abbot Hugon, their lord and master, who entered the house, which then belonged not to the jeweler, but to the chapter, and said to the two spouses :

“ My children, you are released, free and quit of everything ; and I should tell you that from the first I was much struck with the love which united you one to the other. The rights of the abbey once recognized, I was, so far as I was concerned, determined to restore you to perfect enjoyment, after having proved your loyalty by the test of God. And this manumission will cost you nothing.”

Having thus said, he gave them each a little tap with his hand on the cheek. And they fell about his knees weeping tears of joy for such good reasons. The Tourangeau informed the people of the neighborhood, who picked up in the streets the largesse, and received the benedictions of the good Abbot Hugon.

Then, with great honor, Master Anseau held the reins of his mule, as far as the gate of Bussy. During the journey the jeweler, who had taken a bag of silver, threw the pieces to the poor and suffering, crying : “ Largesse, largesse to God ! God save and guard the abbot ! Long live the good Lord Hugon ! ” And returning to his house he regaled his

friends, and had fresh wedding festivities, which lasted a fortnight.

You can imagine that the abbot was reproached by the chapter for this clemency in opening the door for such good prey to escape, so that when a year after the good man Hugon fell ill, his prior told him that it was a punishment from heaven, because he had neglected the sacred interests of the chapter and of God.

“If I have judged that man aright,” said the abbot, “he will not forget what he owes us.”

In fact, this day happening by chance to be the anniversary of the marriage, a monk came to announce that the silversmith supplicated his benefactor to receive him. Soon he entered the room where the abbot was, and spread out before him two marvelous shrines, which since that time no workman has surpassed, in any portion of the Christian world, and which were named the

VOW OF A STEADFAST LOVE.

These two treasures are, as every one knows, placed on the principal altar of the church, and are esteemed as an inestimable work, for the silversmith had spent thereon all his wealth. Nevertheless, this work, far from emptying his purse, filled it full to overflowing, because so rapidly increased his fame and his fortune that he was able to buy a patent of nobility and lands, and he founded the house of Anseau, which has since been held in great honor in fair Touraine.

This teaches us to have always recourse to God and the saints in all the undertakings of life, to be steadfast in all good things, and, above all, that a great love triumphs over everything, which is an old sentence ; but the author has rewritten it, because it is a most pleasant one.

CONCERNING A PROVOST WHO DID NOT RECOGNIZE THINGS.

IN the good town of Bourges, at the time when that lord the King disported himself there, who afterward abandoned his search after pleasure to conquer the kingdom, and did indeed conquer it, there lived a provost, intrusted by him with the maintenance of order, and called the provost-royal. From which came, under the glorious son of the said King, the office of provost of the hôtel, in which behaved rather harshly my lord Tristan of Méré, of whom these tales oft make mention, although he was by no means a merry fellow.

I give this information to the friends who pilfer from old manuscripts to manufacture new ones, and I show thereby how learned these Stories really are, without appearing to be so.

Very well, then, this provost was named Picot or Picault, of which some made *picottin*, *picoter*, and *picorée*; by some Pitot or Pitaut, from which came *pitance*; by others, in Languedoc, Pichot, from which nothing comes worth knowing; by these Petiot or Petiet; by those Petitot or Petinault, or Pitiniaud, which was the masonic appellation; but at Bourges he was called Petit, a name which was eventually adopted by the family, which has multiplied exceedingly, for everywhere you find “des Petits,” and so he will be called Petit in this narrative. I have given this etymology in order to throw a light on our language, and show how our citizens have finished by acquiring names.

But enough of science.

This said provost, who had as many names as there were provinces into which the Court went, was in reality a little bit of a man, whose mother had given him so strange a hide that

when he wanted to laugh he used to stretch his cheeks like a cow making water, and this smile at Court was called the provost's smile.

One day the King, hearing this proverbial expression used by certain lords, said, jokingly :

“You are in error, gentlemen. Petit does not laugh ; he's short of skin below the mouth.”

But with his false laugh, Petit was the more suited to his occupation of watching and catching evil-doers. In fact, he was worth what he cost. For all malice, he was a bit of a cuckold ; for all vice, he went to vespers ; for all wisdom, he obeyed God, when it was convenient ; for all joy, he had a wife in his house ; and for all change in his joy he looked for a man to hang, and when he was asked to find one he never failed to meet him ; but when he was between the sheets he never troubled himself about thieves. Can you find in all Christendom a more virtuous provost ? No ! All provosts hang too little or too much, while this one just hanged as much as was necessary to be a provost.

This goodfellow had for his wife in legitimate marriage, and much to the astonishment of every one, the prettiest little woman in Bourges. So it was that often, while on his road to the execution, he would ask God the same question as several others in the town did—namely, why he, Petit, he the sheriff, he the provost-royal, had to himself, Petit, provost-royal-and-sheriff, a wife so exquisitely shaped, so dowered with charms, that a donkey seeing her pass by would bray with delight. To this God vouchsafed no reply, and doubtless had His reasons. But the slanderous tongues of the town replied for Him, that the young lady was by no means a maiden when she became the wife of Petit. Others said that she did not keep her affections solely for him. The wags answered that donkeys often got into fine stables.

Every one had taunts ready which would have made a nice little collection had any one gathered them together. From

them, however, it is necessary to take nearly four-fourths, seeing that Petit's wife was a virtuous woman, who had a lover for pleasure and a husband for duty. How many were there in the town as careful of their hearts and mouths? If you can point out one to me, I'll give you a kick or a halfpenny, whichever you like. You will find some who have neither husband nor lover. Certain females have a lover and no husband. Ugly women have a husband and no lover. But to meet with a woman who, having one husband and one lover, keeps to the deuce without trying for the trey, there is the miracle, you see, you greenhorns, blockheads, and dolts! Now, then, put the true character of this virtuous woman on the tablets of your memory, go your way, and let me go mine. The good Madame Petit was not of those ladies who are always on the move, running hither and thither, can't keep still a moment, but trot about, worrying, hurrying, chattering, and clattering, and have nothing in them to keep them steady, but are so light that they run after a gastric zephyr as after their quintessence. No; on the contrary, she was a good housewife, always sitting in her chair or sleeping in her bed, ready as a candlestick, waiting for her lover when her husband went out, receiving the husband when the lover had gone.

This dear woman never thought of dressing herself only to annoy and make other wives jealous. Pish! she had found a better use for the merry time of youth, and put life into her joints in order to make the best use of it. Now you know the provost and his good wife. The provost's lieutenant in duties matrimonial, duties which are so heavy that it takes two men to execute them, was a noble lord, a landowner, who disliked the King exceedingly. You must bear this in mind, because it is one of the principal points of the story.

The constable, who was a rough Scotch gentleman, had seen by chance Petit's wife, and wished to have a little conversation with her comfortably, toward the morning, just the time to tell his beads, which was Christianly honest or honestly

Christian, in order to argue with her concerning the things of science or the science of things. Thinking herself quite learned enough, Madame Petit, who was, as has been stated, a virtuous, wise, and honest wife, refused to listen to the said constable. After certain arguments, reasonings, tricks, and messages, which were of no avail, he swore by his great black *coquedouille* that he would rip up the gallant, although he was a man of mark. But he swore nothing about the lady. This denotes a good Frenchman, for in such a dilemma there are certain offended persons who would upset the whole business of three persons by killing four. The constable wagered his big, black *coquedouille* before the King and the lady of Sorel, who were playing cards before supper; and his majesty was well pleased, because he would be relieved of this noble, who displeased him, and that without costing him a *thank you*.

"And how will you manage the affair?" said Madame de Sorel to him, with a smile.

"Oh, oh!" replied the constable. "You may be sure, madame, I do not wish to lose my big black *coquedouille*."

What was, then, this great *coquedouille*?

Ha, ha! This point is shrouded in darkness to a degree that would make you ruin your eyes in ancient books; but it was certainly something of great importance. Nevertheless, let us put on our spectacles and search it out. *Douille* signifies, in Brittany, a girl, and *coque* means a cook's frying-pan. From this word has come into France that of *coquin*—a knave who eats, licks, laps, sucks, and fritters his money away, and gets into stews; is always in hot water, and eats up everything, leads an idle life, and, doing this, becomes wicked, becomes poor, and that incites him to steal or to beg. From this it may be concluded by the learned that the great *coquedouille* was a household utensil in the shape of a kettle, used for cooking things.

"Well," continued the constable, who was the Sieur de Richmond, "I will have the husband ordered to go into the

country for a day and a night, to arrest certain peasants suspected of plotting treacherously with the English. Thereupon my two pigeons, believing their man absent, will be as merry as soldiers off duty; and, if a certain thing takes place, I will let loose the provost, sending him, in the King's name, to search the house where the couple will be, in order that he may slay our friend, who pretends to have this good cordelier* all to himself."

"What does this mean?" said the lady of Beauté.

"Equivoque," answered the King smiling.

"Come to supper," said Madame Agnes. "You are bad men, who with one word insult both the citizens' wives and a holy order."

Now, for a long time, Madame Petit had longed to have a night of liberty, during which she might visit the house of the said noble, where she could make as much noise as she liked without waking the neighbors, because at the provost's house she was afraid of being overheard and had to content herself well with the pilferings of love, little tastes and nibbles, daring at the most only to trot, while what she desired was a smart gallop. On the morrow, therefore, the lady's maid went off about midday to the young lord's house, and told the lover—from whom she received many presents, and therefore in no way disliked him—that he might make his preparations for pleasure, and for supper, for that he might rely upon the provost's better-half being with him in the evening, both hungry and thirsty.

"Good!" said he. "Tell your mistress I will not stint her in anything she desires."

The pages of the cunning constable, who were watching the house, seeing the gallant prepare for his gallantries, and

* *Cordelier*, a Franciscan friar. The allusion is, of course, to the professional "cord" of the husband. There is not sufficient agreement between the French and English languages to give this passage its full force in the translation.

set out the flagons and the meats, went and informed their master that everything had happened as he wished. Hearing this, the good constable rubbed his hands, thinking how nicely the provost would catch the pair. He instantly sent word to him, that by the King's express command he was to return to town, in order that he might seize at the said lord's house an English nobleman, with whom he was vehemently suspected to be arranging a plot of diabolical darkness. But before he put this order into execution, he was to come to the King's hôtel, in order that he might understand the courtesy to be exercised in this case.

The provost, joyous at the chance of speaking to the King, used such diligence that he was in town just at the time when the two lovers were singing the first note of their evening hymn. The lord of cuckoldom and its surrounding lands, who is a strange lord, managed things so well that madame was only conversing with her lord lover at the time that her lord spouse was talking to the constable and the King; at which he was pleased, and so was his wife—a case of concord rare in matrimony.

“I was saying to monseigneur,” said the constable to the provost, as he entered the King's apartments, “that every man in the kingdom has a right to kill his wife and her lover if he find them in an act of infidelity. But his majesty, who is clement, argues that he has only a right to kill the man, and not the woman. Now what would you do, Monsieur the Provost, if by chance you found a gentleman taking a stroll in that fair meadow of which laws, human and divine, enjoin you alone to cultivate the verdure?”

“I would kill everything,” said the provost; “I would scrunch the five hundred thousand devils of nature, flower and seed, and send them flying; the pips and the apples, the grass and the meadow, the woman and the man.”

“You would be in the wrong,” said the King. “That is contrary to the laws of the church and of the State; of the

State, because you might deprive me of a subject; of the church, because you would be sending an innocent to limbo unshriven."

"Sire, I admire your profound wisdom, and I clearly perceive you to be the centre of all justice."

"We can then only kill the knight—Amen," said the constable, "kill the horseman. Now go quickly to the house of the suspected lord, but without letting yourself be bamboozled, do not forget what is due to his position."

The provost, believing he would certainly be chancellor of France if he properly acquitted himself of his task, went from the castle into the town, took his men, arrived at the nobleman's residence, arranged his people outside, placed guards at all doors, opened noiselessly by order of the King, climbs the stairs, asks the servants in which room their master is, puts them under arrest, goes up alone, and knocks at the door of the room where the two lovers are tilting in love's tournament, and says to them:

"Open, in the name of our lord the King!"

The lady recognized her husband's voice, and could not repress a smile, thinking that she had not waited for the King's order to do what she had done. But after laughter came terror. Her lover took his cloak, threw it over him, and came to the door. There, not knowing that his life was in peril, he declared that he belonged to the Court and to the King's household.

"Bah!" said the provost. "I have strict orders from the King; and under pain of being treated as a rebel, you are bound instantly to receive me."

Then the lord went out to him, still holding the door.

"What do you want here?"

"An enemy of our lord the King, whom we command you to deliver into our hands, otherwise you must follow me with him to the castle."

"This," thought the lover, "is a piece of treachery on the

part of the constable, whose propositions my dear mistress treated with scorn. We must get out of this scrape in some way." Then, turning toward the provost, he went double or quits on the risk, reasoning thus with the cuckold :

"My friend, you know that I consider you to be as gallant a man as it is possible for a provost to be in the discharge of his duty. Now, can I have confidence in you? I have here with me the fairest lady of the Court. As for Englishmen, I have not sufficient of one to make the breakfast of the constable, Monsieur de Richmond, who sends you here. This is (to be candid with you) the result of a bet made between myself and the constable, who shares it with the King. Both have wagered that they know who is the lady of my heart ; and I have wagered to the contrary. No one more than myself hates the English, who took my estates in Picardy. Is it not a knavish trick to put justice in motion against me?

"Ho ! ho ! my lord constable, a chamberlain is worth two of you, and I will beat you yet. My dear Petit, I give you permission to search, by night and by day, every nook and cranny of my house. But come in here alone, search my room, turn the bed over, do what you like. Only allow me to cover with a cloth or handkerchief this fair lady, who is at present in the costume of an archangel, in order that you may not know to what husband she belongs."

"Willingly," said the provost. "But I am an old bird not easily caught with chaff, and would like to be sure that it is really a lady of the Court, and not an Englishman, for these English have flesh as white and soft as women, and I know it well, because I've hanged so many of them."

"Well, then," said the lord, "seeing of what crime I am suspected, from which I am bound to free myself, I will go and ask my lady-love to consent for a moment to abandon her modesty. She is too fond of me to refuse to save me from reproach. I will beg her to turn herself over and show you a physiognomy which will in no way compromise her,

and will be sufficient to enable you to recognize a noble woman, although she will be in a sense upside down."

"All right," said the provost.

The lady, having heard every word, had folded up all her clothes, and put them under the bolster, had taken off her chemise, that her husband should not recognize it, had twisted her head up in a sheet, and had brought to light the carnal convexities which commenced where her spine finished.

"Come in, my friend," said the lord.

The provost looked up the chimney, opened the cupboard, the clothes-chest, felt under the bed, in the sheets, and everywhere. Then he began to study what was on the bed.

"My lord," said he, regarding his legitimate appurtenances, "I have seen young English lads with backs like that. You must forgive me doing my duty, but I must see otherwise."

"What do you call otherwise?" said the lord.

"Well, the other physiognomy, or, if you prefer it, the physiognomy of the other."

"Then you will allow madame to cover herself and arrange only to show you sufficient to convince you," said the lover, knowing that the lady had a mark or two easy to recognize.

"Turn your back a moment, so that my dear lady may satisfy propriety."

The wife smiled at her lover, kissed him for his dexterity, arranged herself cunningly; and the husband seeing in full that which the jade had never let him see before, was quite convinced that no English person could be thus fashioned without being a charming Englishwoman.

"Yes, my lord," he whispered in the ear of his lieutenant, "this is certainly a lady of the Court, because the townswomen are neither so well formed nor so charming."

Then the house being thoroughly searched, and no English-

man found, the provost returned, as the constable had told him, to the King's residence.

"Is he slain?" said the constable.

"Who?"

"He who grafted horns upon your forehead."

"I only saw a lady in his couch, who seemed to be greatly enjoying herself with him."

"You, with your own eyes, saw this woman, cursed cuckold, and you did not kill your rival?"

"It was not a common woman, but a lady of the Court."

"You saw her?"

"And verified her in both cases."

"What do you mean by those words?" cried the King, who was bursting with laughter.

"I say, with all the respect due to your majesty, that I have verified the over and the under."

"You do not, then, know the physiognomies of your own wife, you old fool without memory! You deserve to be hanged."

"I hold those features of my wife in too great respect to gaze upon them. Beside, she is so modest that she would die rather than expose an atom of her body."

"True," said the King; "it was not made to be shown."

"Old *coquedouille*! that was your wife," said the constable.

"My lord constable, she is asleep, poor girl!"

"Quick, quick, then! To horse! Let us be off, and if she be in your house I'll forgive you."

Then the constable, followed by the provost, went to the latter's house in less time than it would have taken a beggar to empty the poor-box. "Halloo! there, hi!" Hearing the noise made by the men, which threatened to bring the walls about their ears, the maidservant opened the door, yawning and stretching her arms. The constable and the provost rushed into the room, where, with great difficulty,

they succeeded in waking the lady, who pretended to be terrified, and was so sound asleep that her eyes were full of gum. At this the provost was in great glee, saying to the constable that some one had certainly deceived him, that his wife was a virtuous woman, and was more astonished than any of them at these proceedings. The constable turned on his heel and departed.

The good provost began directly to undress to get to bed quickly, since this adventure had brought his good wife to his memory. When he was unharnessing himself, and was knocking off his nether garments, madame, still astonished, said to him:

“Oh, my dear husband, what is the meaning of all this uproar—this constable and his pages, and why did he come to see if I was asleep? Is it to be henceforward part of a constable’s duty to look after our——”

“I do not know,” said the provost, interrupting her, to tell her what had happened to him.

“And you saw without my permission a lady of the Court! Ha! ha! heu! heu! hein!”

Then she began to moan, to weep, and to cry in such a deplorable manner, and so loudly, that her lord was quite aghast.

“What’s the matter, my darling? What is it? What do you want?”

“Ah, you won’t love me any more after seeing how beautiful Court ladies are!”

“Nonsense, my child! They are great ladies. I don’t mind telling you in confidence; they are great ladies in every respect.”

“Well,” said she, “am I nicer?”

“Ah!” said he, “in a great measure. Yes!”

“They have, then, great happiness,” said she, sighing, “when I have so much with so little beauty.”

Thereupon the provost tried a better argument to argue with his good wife, and argued so well that she finished by allowing herself to be convinced that heaven has ordained that much pleasure may be obtained from small things.

This shows us that nothing here below can prevail against the church of cuckolds.



HOW THE PRETTY MAID OF PORTILLON CONVINCED HER JUDGE.

THE maid of Portillon, who became, as every one knows, la Tascherette, was, before she became a dyer, a laundress at the place of Portillon, from which she took her name. If any there be who do not know Tours, it may be as well to state that Portillon is down the Loire, on the same side as St. Cyr, about as far from the bridge which leads to the cathedral of Tours as the said bridge is distant from Marmoutier, since the bridge is in the centre of the embankment between Portillon and Marmoutier. Do you thoroughly understand?

Yes? Good! Now the maid had there her wash-house, from which she ran to the Loire with her washing in a second, and took the ferry-boat to get to St. Martin, which was on the other side of the river, for she had to deliver the greater part of her work in Chateauneuf and other places. About Midsummer Day, seven years before marrying old Taschereau, she had just reached the right age to be loved. As she was a merry girl she allowed herself to be loved, without making a choice from any of the lads who pursued her with their attentions.

Although there used to come to the bench under her window the son of Rabelais, who had seven boats on the Loire, Jehan's eldest, Marchandean the tailor, and Peccard the ecclesiastical goldsmith, she made fun of them all, because she wished to be taken to church before burdening herself with a man, which proves that she was an honest woman until she was wheedled out of her virtue. She was one of those girls who take great care not to be contaminated, but who, if by chance they get deceived, let things take their course, thinking that for one stain or for fifty a good polishing up is necessary. These characters demand our indulgence.

A young noble of the Court perceived her one day when she was crossing the water in the glare of the noonday sun, which lit up her ample charms, and, seeing her, asked whom she was. An old man, who was working on the banks, told him she was called the Pretty Maid of Portillon, a laundress celebrated for her merry ways and her virtue. This young lord, beside ruffles to starch, had many precious linen draperies and things: he resolved to give the custom of his house to this girl, whom he stopped on the road.

He was thanked by her and heartily, because he was the Sire du Fou, the King's chamberlain. This encounter made her so joyful that her mouth was full of his name. She talked about it a great deal to the people of St. Martin, and when she got back to her wash-house was still full of it, and on the morrow at her work her tongue went nineteen to the dozen, and all on the same subject, so that as much was said concerning my Lord du Fou in Portillon as of God in a sermon; that is, a great deal too much.

"If she works like that in cold water, what will she do in warm?" said an old washerwoman. "She wants du Fou; he'll give her du Fou!" (some sport).

The first time this giddy wench, with her head full of Monsieur du Fou, had to deliver the linen at his hotel, the chamberlain wished to see her, and was very profuse in praises and compliments concerning her charms, and wound up by telling her that she was not at all silly to be beautiful, and therefore he would give her more than she expected. The deed followed the word, for the moment his people were out of the room he began to caress the maid, who, thinking he was about to take out the money from his purse, dared not look at the purse, but said, like a girl ashamed to take her wages:

"It will be for the first time."

"It will be soon," said he.

Some people say that he had great difficulty in forcing her

to accept what he offered her, and hardly forced her at all; others that he forced her badly, because she came out, like an army flagging on the route, crying and groaning, and came to the judge. It happened that the judge was out. La Portillone awaited his return in his room, weeping and saying to the servant that she had been robbed, because Monseigneur du Fou had given her nothing but his mischief; whilst a canon of the chapter used to give her large sums for that which Monsieur du Fou wanted for nothing. If she loved a man she would think it wise to do things for him for nothing, because it would be a pleasure to her; but the chamberlain had treated her roughly, and not kindly and gently, as he should have done, and that therefore he owed her the thousand crowns of the canon.

The judge came in, saw the wench, and wished to kiss her, but she put herself on guard, and said she had come to make a complaint. The judge replied that certainly she could have the offender hanged if she liked, because he was most anxious to serve her. The injured maiden replied that she did not wish the death of her man, but that he should pay her a thousand gold crowns, because she had been robbed against her will.

"Ha! ha!" said the judge, "what he took was worth more than that."

"For the thousand crowns I'll cry quits, because I shall be able to live without washing."

"He who has robbed you, is he well off?"

"Oh yes."

"Then he shall pay dearly for it. Who is it?"

"Monseigneur du Fou."

"Oh, that alters the case," said the judge.

"But justice?" queried she.

"I said the case, not the justice of it," replied the judge.

"I must know how the affair occurred."

Then the girl related naïvely how she was arranging the

young lord's ruffles in his wardrobe, when he began to play with her skirts, and she turned round, saying:

"Go on with you!"

"You have no case," said the judge, "for by that speech he thought that you gave him leave to go on. Ha! ha!"

Then she declared that she had defended herself, weeping and crying out, and that that constitutes an assault.

"A wench's antics to incite him," said the judge.

Finally, la Portillone declared that against her will she had been taken round the waist and thrown, although she had kicked and cried and struggled, but that seeing no help at hand she had lost courage.

"Good! good!" said the judge. "Did you take pleasure in the affair?"

"No," said she. "My anguish can only be paid for with a thousand crowns."

"My dear," said the judge, "I cannot receive your complaint, because I believe no girl can be thus treated against her will."

"Hi! hi! hi! Ask your servant," said the little laundress sobbing, "and hear what she'll tell you."

The servant affirmed that there were pleasant assaults and unpleasant ones; that if la Portillone had received neither amusement nor money, either one or the other was due to her. This wise counsel threw the judge into a state of great perplexity.

"Jacqueline," said he, "before I sup I'll get to the bottom of this. Now go and fetch my needle and the red thread that I sew the law papers with."

Jacqueline came back with a big needle, pierced with a pretty little hole, and a big red thread, such as the judges use. Then she remained standing to see the question decided, very much disturbed, as was also the complainant, at these mysterious preparations.

"My dear," said the judge, "I am going to hold the bod-

kin, of which the eye is sufficiently large to put this thread into it without trouble. If you do put it in, I will take up your case, and will make monseigneur offer you a compromise."

"What's that?" said she. "I will not allow it."

"It is a word used in justice to signify an agreement."

"A compromise is then agreeable with justice?" said la Portillone.

"My dear, this violence has also opened your mind. Are you ready?"

"Yes," said she.

The waggish judge gave the poor nymph fair play, holding the eye steady for her; but when she wished to slip in the thread that she had twisted to make straight, he moved a little, and the thread went on the other side. She suspected the judge's argument, wetted the thread, stretched it, and came back again. The judge moved, twisted about, and wriggled like a bashful maiden; still the cursed thread would not enter. The girl kept trying at the eye, and the judge kept fidgeting. The marriage of the thread could not be consummated, the bodkin remained virgin, and the servant began to laugh, saying to la Portillone that she knew better how to endure than to perform. Then the roguish judge laughed too, and the fair Portillone cried for her golden crowns.

"If you don't keep still," cried she, losing patience; "if you keep moving about, I shall never be able to put the thread in."

"Then, my dear, if you had done the same, monseigneur would have been unsuccessful too. Think, too, how easy is the one affair, and how difficult the other."

The pretty wench, who declared she had been forced, remained thoughtful, and sought to find a means to convince the judge by showing how she had been compelled to yield, since the honor of all poor girls liable to violence was at stake.

“Monseigneur, in order that the bet may be fair, I must do exactly as the young lord did. If I had only had to move I should be moving still, but he went through other performances.”

“Let us hear them,” replied the judge.

Then la Portillone straightens the thread, and rubs it in the wax of the candle, to make it firm and straight; then she looks toward the eye of the bodkin, held by the judge, slipping always to the right or to the left.

Then she at once began making endearing and funny little speeches, such as:

“Ah, the pretty little bodkin! What a pretty mark to aim at! Never did I see such a little jewel! What a pretty little eye! Let me put this little thread into it! Ah, you will hurt my poor thread, my nice little thread! Keep still! Come, my love of a judge, judge of my love! Won’t the thread go nicely into this iron gate, which makes good use of the thread, for it comes out very much out of order?”

Then she burst out laughing, for she was better up in this game than the judge, who laughed too, so saucy and comical and arch was she, pushing the thread backward and forward. She kept the poor judge with the case in his hand until seven o’clock, keeping on fidgeting and moving about like a school-boy let loose; but as la Portillone kept on trying to put the thread in, he could not help it. As, however, his joint was burning and his wrist was tired, he was obliged to rest himself for a minute on the side of the table; then very dexterously the fair maid of Portillone slipped the thread in, saying:

“That’s how the thing occurred.”

“But my joint was burning.”

“So was mine,” said she.

The judge, convinced, told la Portillone that he would speak to Monseigneur du Fou, and would himself carry the affair through, since it was certain the young lord had em-

braced her against her will, but that for valid reasons he would keep the affair dark.

On the morrow the judge went to the Court and saw Monseigneur du Fou, to whom he recounted the young woman's complaint, and how she had set forth her case. This complaint lodged in Court, tickled the King immensely. Young du Fou having said that there was some truth in it, the King asked if he had much difficulty, and as he replied innocently, "No," the King declared the girl was quite worth a hundred gold crowns, and the chamberlain gave them to the judge, in order not to be taxed with stinginess, and said that starch would be a good income to la Portillone.

The judge came back to la Portillone, and said, smiling, that he had raised a hundred gold crowns for her. But if she desired the balance of the thousand, there were at that moment in the King's apartments certain lords who, knowing the case, had offered to make up the sum for her, with her consent. The little hussy did not refuse this offer, saying that in order to do no more washing in the future she did not mind doing a little hard work now. She gratefully acknowledged the trouble the good judge had taken, and gained her thousand crowns in a month. From this came the falsehoods and jokes concerning her, because out of these ten lords jealousy made a hundred, whilst, differently from young men, la Portillone settled down to a virtuous life directly she had her thousand crowns. Even a duke, who would have counted out five hundred crowns, would have found this girl rebellious, which proves she was niggardly with her property.

It is true that the King caused her to be sent for to his retreat of the Rue Quinquangrogne, on the mall of Chardonneret, and found her extremely pretty, exceedingly affectionate, enjoyed her society, and forbade the sergeants to interfere with her in any way whatever. Seeing she was so beautiful, Nicole Beaupertuis, the King's mistress, gave her a hundred gold crowns to go to Orleans, in order to see if the

color of the Loire was the same there as at Portillon. She went there, and the more willingly because she did not care very much for the King. When the good man came who confessed the King in his last hours, and was afterward canonized, la Portillone went to him to polish up her conscience, did penance, and founded a bed in the leper-house of St. Lazare-les-Tours.

Many ladies whom you know have been assaulted by more than two lords, and have founded no other beds than those of their own houses. It is as well to relate this fact, in order to cleanse the reputation of this honest girl, who herself once washed dirty things, and who afterward became famous for her clever tricks and her wit. She gave a proof of her merit in marrying Taschereau, whom she cuckolded right merrily, as has been related in the story of "The Reproach."

This proves to us most satisfactorily that with strength and patience justice itself can be violated.



CONCERNING A POOR MAN WHO WAS CALLED LE VIEUX PAR-CHEMINS.

THE old chronicler who furnished the hemp to weave the present yarn is said to have lived at the time when the affair occurred in the city of Rouen. In the environs of this fair town, where at that time dwelt Duke Richard, an old man used to beg, whose name was Tryballot, but to whom was given the nickname of *Le Vieux par-Chemins*, or Old Man of the Roads; not because he was yellow and dry as vellum, but because he was always in the highways and the byways—up hill and down dale—slept with the sky for his counterpane, and went about in rags and tatters. Notwithstanding this, he was very popular in the duchy, where every one had grown used to him, so much so that if the month went by without any one seeing his cup held out toward them, people would say: “Where is the old man?” and the usual answer was: “On the road.”

This said man had had for a father a Tryballot, who was in his lifetime a skilled artisan, so economical and careful that he left considerable wealth to his son. But the young lad soon frittered it away, for he was the very opposite of the old fellow, who, returning from the fields to his house, picked up, now here, now there, many a little stick of wood left right and left, saying, conscientiously, that one should never come home empty handed.

Thus he warmed himself in winter at the expense of the careless; and he did well. Every one recognized what a good example this was for the country, since a year before his death no one left a morsel of wood on the road; he had compelled the most dissipated to be thrifty and orderly. But his son made ducks and drakes of everything, and did not follow

his wise examples. The father had predicted the thing. From the boy's earliest youth, when the good Tryballot set him to watch the birds who came to eat the peas, the beans, and the grain, and to drive the thieves away, above all, the jays, who spoiled everything, he would study their habits, and took delight in watching with what grace they came and went, flew off loaded and returned, watching with a quick eye the snares and nets; and he would laugh heartily at their cleverness in avoiding them.

Tryballot senior went into a passion when he found his grain considerably less in measure. But, although he pulled his son's ears whenever he caught him idling and trifling under a nut tree, the little rascal did not alter his conduct, but continued to study the habits of the blackbirds, sparrows, and other intelligent marauders.

One day his father told him that he would be wise to model himself after them, for that, if he continued this kind of life, he would be compelled in his old age, like them, to pilfer, and, like them, would be pursued by justice. This came true; for, as has before been stated, he dissipated in a few days the crowns which his careful father had acquired in a lifetime. He dealt with men as he did with the sparrows, letting every one put a hand in his pocket, and contemplating the grace and polite demeanor of those who assisted to empty it. The end of his wealth was thus soon reached. When the devil had the empty money-bag to himself, Tryballot did not appear at all cut up, saying that he "did not wish to damn himself for this world's goods, and that he had studied philosophy in the school of the birds."

After having thoroughly enjoyed himself, of all his goods, there only remained to him a goblet bought at Landict, and three dice, quite sufficient furniture for drinking and gambling, so that he went about without being encumbered, as are the great, with chariots, carpets, dripping-pans, and an infinite number of varlets. Tryballot wished to see his good

friends, but they no longer knew him, which fact gave him leave no longer to recognize any one. Seeing this he determined to choose a profession in which there was nothing to do and plenty to gain. Thinking this over he remembered the indulgences of the blackbirds and the sparrows. Then the good Tryballot selected for his profession that of begging money at people's houses, and pilfering.

From the first day, charitable people gave him something, and Tryballot was content, finding the business good, without advance money or bad debts; on the contrary, full of accommodation. He went about it so heartily that he was liked everywhere, and received a thousand consolations refused to rich people. The goodman watched the peasants planting, sowing, reaping, and making harvest, and said to himself that they worked a little for him as well. He who had a pig in his larder owed him a bit of it, without suspecting it. The man who baked a loaf in his oven often cooked it for Tryballot without knowing it. He took nothing by force; on the contrary, people said to him kindly, while making him a present:

“Here, *Vieux par-Chemins*, cheer up, old fellow. How are you? Come, take this; the cat began on it, you can finish it.”

Vieux par-Chemins was at all the weddings, baptisms, and funerals, because he went everywhere where there was, openly or secretly, merriment and feasting. He religiously kept the statutes and canons of his order—namely, to do nothing, because if he had been able to do the smallest amount of work no one would ever give him anything again. After having refreshed himself, this wise man would lay at full length in a ditch, or against a church wall, and think over public affairs; and then he would philosophize, like his pretty tutors, the blackbirds, jays, and sparrows, and thought a good deal while mumping; for, because his apparel was poor, was that a reason his understanding should not be rich? His philosophy amused

his clients, to whom he would repeat, by way of thanks, the finest aphorisms of his science. According to him, suppers produced gout in the rich ; he boasted that he had nimble feet, because his shoemaker gave him boots that did not pinch his corns.

There were aching heads beneath diadems, but his never ached, because it was touched neither by luxury nor any other chaplet. And again, that jeweled rings hindered the circulation of the blood. Although he covered himself with sores, after the manner of beggars, you may be sure he was as sound as a child at the baptismal font. The good man disported himself with other rogues, playing with his three dice, which he kept to remind him to spend his coppers, in order that he might always be poor. In spite of his vow, he was, like all the order of mendicants, so wealthy that one day at the Paschal feast, another beggar wishing to rent his profit from him, Vieux par-Chemins refused ten crowns for it ; in fact, the same evening he spent fourteen crowns in drinking the healths of the alms-givers, because it is in the statutes of beggary that one should show one's gratitude to donors.

Although he carefully got rid of that which had been a source of anxiety to others, he having too much wealth went in search of poverty, he was happier with nothing in the world than when he had his father's money. And seeing what are the conditions of nobility, he was always on the high-road to it, because he did nothing except according to his fancy, and lived nobly without labor. Thirty crowns would not have got him out of a bed when he was once in it. The morrow always dawned for him as it did for others, while leading this happy life ; which according to the statement of Plato, whose authority has more than once been invoked in these narratives, certain ancient sages had led before him. At last Vieux par-Chemins reached the age of eighty-two years, having never been a single day without picking up money, and possessed the healthiest color and complexion

imaginable. He believed that if he had persevered in the race for wealth he would have been spoiled and buried years before.

It is possible he was right.

In his early youth Vieux par-Chemins had the illustrious virtue of being very partial to the ladies; and his abundance of love was, it is said, the result of his studies among the sparrows. Thus it was that he was always ready to give the ladies his assistance in counting the joists, and this generosity finds its physical cause in the fact that, having nothing to do, he was always ready to do something. His secret virtues brought about, it is said, that popularity which he enjoyed in the provinces. Certain people say that the lady of Caumont had him in her castle, to learn the truth about these qualities, and kept him there for a week, to prevent him begging. But the good man jumped over the hedges and fled in great terror of being rich. Advancing in age, this great quintessencer found himself disdained, although his notable faculties of loving were in no way impaired. This unjust turning away on the part of the female tribe caused the first trouble of Vieux par-Chemins, and the celebrated trial of Rouen, to which it is time I came.

In this eighty-second year of his age he was compelled to remain continent for about seven months, during which time he met no woman kindly disposed toward him; and he declared before the judge that that caused the greatest astonishment of his long and honorable life. In this most pitiable state he saw in the fields during the merry month of May a girl, who by chance was a maiden, and minding cows.

The heat was so excessive that this cowherdess had stretched herself beneath the shadow of a beech tree, her face to the ground, after the custom of people who labor in the fields, in order to get a little nap while her animals were grazing. She was awakened by the deed of the old man, who had stolen from her that which a poor girl can only lose once. Finding

herself ruined without receiving from the process either knowledge or pleasure, she cried out so loudly that the people working in the fields ran to her, and were called upon by her as witnesses, at the time when that destruction was visible in her which is appropriate only to a bridal night. She cried and groaned, saying that the old ape might just as well have played his tricks on her mother, who would have said nothing.

He made answer to the peasants, who had already raised their hoes to kill him, that he had been compelled to enjoy himself. These people objected that a man can enjoy himself very well without enjoying a maiden—a case for the provost which would bring him straight to the gallows ; and he was taken with a great clamor to the jail at Rouen.

The girl, interrogated by the provost, declared that she was sleeping in order to do something, and that she thought she was dreaming of her lover, with whom she was then at loggerheads, because before marriage he wished to take certain liberties ; and, jokingly, in this dream she let him reconnoitre to a certain extent, in order to avoid any dispute afterward, and that in spite of her prohibition he went further than she had given him leave to go, and finding more pain than pleasure in the affair, she had been awaked by Vieux par-Chemins, who had attacked her as a gray friar would a ham at the end of Lent.

This trial caused so great a commotion in the town of Rouen that the provost was sent for by the duke, who had an intense desire to know if the thing were true. Upon the affirmation of the provost, he ordered Vieux par-Chemins to be brought to his palace, in order that he might hear what defense he had to make.

The poor old fellow appeared before the prince, and informed him naïvely of the misfortune which his impulsive nature had brought upon him, declaring that he was like a young fellow impelled by imperious desires ; that up to the present year he had sweethearts of his own, but for the last

eight months he had been a total abstainer : that he was too poor to find favor with the girls of the town ; that honest women, who once were charitable to him, had taken a dislike to his hair, which had feloniously turned white, in spite of the green youth of his love, and that he felt compelled to avail himself of the chance when he saw this maiden, who, stretched at full length under the beech tree, left visible the lining of her dress and two hemispheres white as snow, which had deprived him of reason ; that the fault was the girl's and not his, because young maidens should be forbidden to entice passers-by by showing them that which caused Venus to be named *Callipyge* ; finally, the prince ought to be aware what trouble a man has to control himself at the hour of noon, because that was the time of day at which King David was smitten with the wife of the *Sieur Uriah* ; that where a Hebrew king, beloved of God, had succumbed, a poor man, deprived of all joy, and reduced to begging his bread, could not expect to escape ; that for the matter of that, he was quite willing to sing psalms for the remainder of his days, and play upon the lute by way of penance, in imitation of the said King, who had had the misfortune to slay a husband, while he had only done a trifling injury to a peasant-girl.

The duke listened to the arguments of *Vieux par-Chemins*, and said that he was a man of good parts. Then he made this memorable decree, that if, as this beggar declared, he had need of such gratifications at his age he gave him permission to prove it at the foot of the ladder which he would have to mount to be hanged, according to the sentence already passed on him by the provost ; that if then, the rope being round his neck, between the priest and the hangman, a like desire seized him he should have a free pardon.

This decree becoming known, there was a tremendous crowd to see the old fellow led to the gallows. There was a line drawn up as if for a ducal entry, and in it a many more bonnets than caps. *Vieux par-Chemins* was saved by a lady

curious to see how this precious violater would finish his career. She told the duke that religion demanded that he should have a fair chance. And she dressed herself out as if for a ball; she brought intentionally into evidence two hillocks of such snowy whiteness that the whitest linen neckerchief would have paled before them; indeed, these fruits of love stood out, without a wrinkle, over her corset, like two beautiful apples, and made one's mouth water, so exquisite were they. This noble lady, who was one of those who rouse one's manhood, had a smile ready on her lips for the old fellow.

Vieux par-Chemins, dressed in garments of coarse cloth, more certain of being in the desired state after hanging than before it, came along between the officers of justice with a sad countenance, glancing now here, now there, and seeing nothing but head-dresses; and he would, he declared, have given a hundred crowns for a girl tucked up as was the cowherdess, whose charms, though they had been his ruin, he still remembered, and they might still have saved him; but, as he was old, the remembrance was not sufficiently recent. But when, at the foot of the ladder, he saw the twin charms of the lady, and the pretty delta that their confluent rotundities produced, the sight so much excited him that his emotion was patent to the spectators.

"Make haste and see that the required conditions are fulfilled," said he to the officers. "I have gained my pardon, but I cannot answer for my saviour."

The lady was well pleased with this homage, which, she said, was greater than his offense. The guards, whose business it was to proceed to a verification, believed the culprit to be the devil, because never in their writs had they seen an I so perpendicular as was his old man. He was marched in triumph through the town to the palace of the duke, to whom the guards and others stated the facts. In that period of ignorance, this affair was thought so much of that the town voted the erection of a column on the spot where the old fellow gained his par-

don, and he was portrayed thereon in stone in the attitude he assumed at the sight of that honest and virtuous lady.

The statue was still to be seen when Rouen was taken by the English, and the writers of the period have included this history among the notable events of the reign.

As the town offered to supply the old man with all he required, and see to his sustenance, clothing, and amusements, the good duke arranged matters by giving the injured maiden a thousand crowns and marrying her to her seducer, who then lost his name of Vieux par-Chemins. He was named by the duke the *Sieur de Bonne-C*——. This wife was confined nine months afterward of a perfectly formed male child, alive and kicking, and born with two teeth. From this marriage came the house of *Bonne-C*——, who, from motives modest but wrong, besought our well-beloved King, Louis Eleventh, to grant them letters-patent to change their name into that of *Bonne-Chose* (good thing).

The King pointed out to the *Sieur de Bonne-C*—— that there was in the State of Venice an illustrious family named *Coglioni*, who wore three “*C*—— au naturel” on their coat-of-arms. The gentlemen of the House of *Bonne-C*—— stated to the King that their wives were ashamed to be thus called in public assemblies; the King answered that they would lose a good deal, because there is a good deal in a name. Nevertheless, he granted the letters. After that this race was known by this name, and founded families in many provinces. The first *Sieur de Bonne-C*—— lived another twenty-seven years, and had another son and two daughters. But he grieved much at becoming rich, and no longer being able to pick up a living in the streets.

From this you can obtain finer lessons and higher morals than from any story you will read all your life long—of course, excepting these ever-most glorious Droll Stories—namely, that never could adventure of this sort have happened to the impaired and ruined constitutions of Court

rascals, rich people, and others who dig their graves with their teeth by overeating and drinking many wines that impair the implements of happiness ; which said overfed people were lolling luxuriously in costly draperies and on feather beds, while the *Sieur de Bonne-Chose* was roughing it. In a similar situation, if they had eaten cabbage, it would have given them the diarrhœa. This may incite many of those who read this story to change their mode of life, in order to imitate *Vieux par-Chemins* in his old age.



ODD SAYINGS OF THREE PILGRIMS.

WHEN the pope left this good town of Avignon to take up his residence in Rome, certain pilgrims were thrown out who had set out for this country, and would have to pass the high Alps, in order to gain that said town of Rome, where they were going to seek the *remittimus* of various sins. Then were to be seen on the roads, and in the hostelries, those who wore the collar of the order of Cain, otherwise the flower of the penitents, all wicked fellows, burdened with leprous souls, which thirsted to bathe in the papal *piscina*,* and all carrying with them gold or precious things to purchase absolution, pay for their beds, and present to the saints.

You may be sure that those who drank water going, on their return, if the landlords gave them water, wished it to be the holy water of the cellar.

At this time, three pilgrims came to this said town of Avignon to their injury, seeing that it was widowed of the pope. While they were passing the Rhodane, to reach the Mediterranean coast, one of the three pilgrims, who had with him a son about ten years of age, parted company with the others, and near the town of Milan suddenly appeared again, but without the boy. Now in the evening, at supper, they had a hearty feast in order to celebrate the return of the pilgrim, whom they thought had become disgusted with penitence through the pope not being in Avignon.

Of these three roamers toward Rome, one had come from the city of Paris, the other from Germany, and the third, who doubtless wished to instruct his son on the journey, had his home in the duchy of Burgundy, in which he had certain fiefs, and was a younger son of the house of Villers-la-Faye

* A stone trough in the chancel with a channel to carry off waste water.

(*Villa in Fago*), and was named la Vaugrenand. The German baron had met the citizen of Paris just past Lyons, and both had accosted the Sieur de la Vaugrenand in sight of Avignon.

Now, in this hostelry the three pilgrims loosened their tongues, and agreed to journey to Rome together, in order the better to resist the footpads, night-birds, and other malefactors, who made it their business to ease pilgrims of that which weighed upon their bodies before the pope eased them of that which weighed upon their consciences. After drinking, the three companions commenced talking together, for the bottle is the key of conversation, and each made this confession—that the cause of his pilgrimage was a woman. The servant, who watched them drinking, told them that of a hundred pilgrims who stopped in the locality, ninety-nine were traveling from the same thing. These three wise men then began to consider how pernicious is woman to man.

The baron showed the heavy gold chain that he had in his hauberk to present to St. Peter, and said his crime was such that he would not get rid of it with the value of two such chains. The Parisian took off his glove and exposed a ring set with a white diamond, saying that he had a hundred like it for the pope. The Burgundian took off his hat and exhibited two wonderful pearls, that were beautiful ear pendants for Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, and candidly confessed that he would rather have left them round his wife's neck.

Thereupon the servant exclaimed that their sins must have been as great as those of Visconti.

Then the pilgrims replied that they were such that they had each made a solemn vow in their minds never to go astray again during the remainder of their days, however beautiful the woman might be, and this in addition to the penance which the pope might impose upon them.

Then the servant expressed her astonishment that all had made the same vow. The Burgundian added that this vow had been the cause of his lagging behind, because he had

been in extreme fear that his son, in spite of his age, might go astray, and that he had made a vow to prevent people and beasts alike gratifying their passions in his house or upon his estates. The baron having inquired the particulars of the adventure, the knight narrated the affair as follows :

“ You know that the good Countess Jeanne d’Avignon made formerly a law for the harlots, whom she compelled to live in the outskirts of the town in houses with window-shutters painted red and kept closed. Now passing in your company through this vile neighborhood, my lad remarked these houses with closed window-shutters, painted red, and his curiosity being aroused—for these ten-year-old little devils have eyes for everything—he pulled me by the sleeve, and kept on pulling me until he had learned from me what these houses were. Then, to obtain peace, I told him that young lads had nothing to do with such places, and could only enter them at the peril of their lives, because it was a place where men and women were manufactured, and the danger was such for any one unacquainted with the business that, if a novice entered, flying chancres and other wild beasts would seize upon his face. Fear seized the lad, who then followed me to the hostelry in a state of agitation, and not daring to cast his eyes upon these said bordels.

“ While I was in the stable, seeing to the putting up of the horses, my son went off like a robber, and the servant was unable to tell what had become of him. Then I was in great fear of the wenches, but had confidence in the laws, which forbade them to admit such children.

“ At supper-time the rascal came back to me looking no more ashamed of himself than did our divine Saviour in the temple among the doctors.

“ ‘ Whence come you ? ’ said I to him.

“ ‘ From the houses with the red shutters,’ he replied.

“ ‘ Little blackguard,’ said I, ‘ I’ll give you a taste of the whip.’

"Then he began to moan and to cry. I told him that if he would confess all that had happened to him I would let him off the beating.

" 'Ha!' said he, 'I took good care not to go in, because of the flying chancres and other wild beasts. I only looked through the chinks of the windows, in order to see how men were manufactured.'

" 'And what did you see?' I asked.

" 'I saw,' said he, 'a fine woman just being finished, because she only wanted one peg, which a young workman was fitting in with energy. Directly she was finished she turned round, spoke to, and kissed her manufacturer.'

" 'Have your supper,' said I; and the same night I returned into Burgundy, and left him with his mother, being sorely afraid that at the first town he might want to fit a peg into some girl."

"These children often make these sort of answers," said the Parisian. "One of my neighbor's children revealed the cuckoldom of his father by a reply. One day I asked, to see if he were well instructed at school in religious matters:

" 'What is hope?'

" 'One of the King's big archers, who comes here when father goes out,' said he.

"Indeed, the sergeant of the archers was named Hope. My friend was dumfounded at this, and, although to keep his countenance he looked in the mirror, he could not see his horns there."

The baron observed that the boy's remark was good in this way: that Hope is a person who comes to bed with us when the realities of life are out of the way.

"Is a cuckold made in the image of God?" asked the Burgundian.

"No," said the Parisian, "because God was wise in this respect, that He took no wife; therefore is He happy through all eternity."

"But," said the maidservant, "cuckolds are made in the image of God before they are horned."

Then the three pilgrims began to curse the women, saying that they were the cause of all the evil in the world.

"Their heads are as empty as helmets," said the Burgundian.

"Their hearts are straight as bill-hooks," said the Parisian.

"Why are there so many men pilgrims and so few women pilgrims?" said the German baron.

"Their cursed member never sins," replied the Parisian; "it knows neither father nor mother, the commandments of God, nor those of the church, neither laws divine nor human; their member knows no doctrine, understands no heresies, and cannot be blamed; it is innocent of all, and always on the laugh; its understanding is *nil*; and for this reason do I hold it in utter detestation."

"I also," said the Burgundian, "and I begin to understand the different reading by a learned man of the verses of the Bible, in which the account of the Creation is given. In this Commentary, which in my country we call a *Noël* (tidings), lies the reason of imperfection of this feature of women, of which, different to that of other females, no man can slake the thirst, such diabolical heat existing there.

"In this Noël it is stated that the Lord God, having turned His head to look at a donkey, who had brayed for the first time in His Paradise, while He was manufacturing Eve, the devil seized this moment to put his finger into this too divine creature, and made a warm wound, which the Lord took care to close with a stitch, from which comes the maid. By means of this frenum, the woman should remain closed, and children be made in the same manner in which God made the angels, by a pleasure as far above carnal pleasure as the heaven is above the earth.

"Observing this closing, the devil, wild at being done, pinched the *Sieur Adam*, who was asleep, by the skin, and

stretched a portion of it out in imitation of his diabolical tail ; but as the father of man was on his back this appendage came out in front. Thus these two productions of the devil had a desire to reunite themselves, following the law of similarities which God had laid down for the conduct of the world. From this came the first sin and the sorrows of the human race, because God, noticing the devil's work, determined to see what would come of it."

The servant declared that they were quite correct in their statements, for that woman was a bad animal, and that she herself knew some who were better under the ground than on it. The pilgrims, noticing then how pretty the girl was, were afraid of breaking their vows, and went straight to bed. The girl went and told her mistress that she was harboring infidels, and told her what they had said about women.

"Ah!" said the landlady, "what matters it to me the thoughts my customers have in their brains, so long as their purses are well filled."

And when the servant had told of the jewels, she exclaimed :

"Ah, these are questions which concern all women. Let us go and reason with them. I'll take the nobles, you can have the citizen."

The landlady, who was the most shameless inhabitant of the duchy of Milan, went into the chamber where the *Sieur de la Vaugrenand* and the German baron were sleeping and congratulated them upon their vows, saying that the women would not lose much by them ; but to accomplish these said vows it was necessary they should endeavor to withstand the strongest temptation. Then she offered to lay down beside them, so anxious was she to see if she would be left unmolested, a thing which had never happened to her yet in the company of a man.

On the morrow, at breakfast, the servant had the ring on her finger, her mistress had the gold chain and the pearl ear-

rings. The three pilgrims stayed in the town about a month, spending there all the money they had in their purses, and agreed that if they had spoken so severely of women it was because they had not known those of Milan.

On his return to Germany the baron made this observation : that he was only guilty of one sin, that of being in his castle. The citizen of Paris came back full of stories for his wife, and found her full of Hope. The Burgundian saw Madame de la Vaugrenand so troubled that he nearly died of the consolations he administered to her, in spite of his former opinions.

This teaches us to hold our tongues in hostelries.



INNOCENCE.

By the double red crest of my fowl, and by the rose lining of my sweetheart's slipper ! By all the horns of well-beloved cuckolds, and by the virtue of their blessed wives ! the finest work of man is neither poetry, nor painted pictures, nor music, nor castles, nor statues, be they carved never so well, nor rowing, nor sailing galleys, but children. Understand me, children up to the age of ten years, for after that they become men or women, and, cutting their wisdom teeth, are not worth what they cost : the worst are the best.

Watch them playing, prettily and innocently, with slippers ; above all, cancellated ones, with the household utensils, leaving that which displeases them, crying after that which pleases them, munching the sweets and confectionery in the house, nibbling at the stores, and always laughing as soon as their teeth are cut, and you will agree with me that they are in every way lovable ; beside which they are flower and fruit—the fruit of love, the flower of life. Before their minds have been unsettled by the disturbances of life, there is nothing in this world more blessed or more pleasant than their sayings, which are naïve beyond description. This is as true as the double chewing-machine of a cow.

Do not expect a man to be innocent after the manner of children, because there is an (I know not what) ingredient of reason in the naïveté of a man, while the naïveté of children is candid, immaculate, and has all the finesse of the mother, which is plainly proven in this tale.

Queen Catherine was at that time Dauphine, and to make herself welcome to the King, her father-in-law, who at that time was very ill indeed, presented him, from time to time, with Italian pictures, knowing that he liked them much, being

a friend of the *Sieur Raphaël d'Urbain* and of the *Sieurs Primatice* and *Leonardo da Vinci*, to whom he sent large sums of money.

She obtained from her family—who had the pick of these works, because at that time the *Duc de' Medici* governed Tuscany—a precious picture, painted by a Venetian named *Titian* (artist to the Emperor *Charles*, and in very high favor), in which there were portraits of *Adam* and *Eve* at the moment when God left them to wander about the terrestrial Paradise, and were painted their full height, in the costume of the period, in which it is difficult to make a mistake, because they were attired in their ignorance, and caparisoned with the divine grace which enveloped them—a difficult thing to execute on account of the color, but one in which the said *Sieur Titian* excelled. The picture was put into the room of the poor King, who was then ill with the disease of which he eventually died.

It had a great success at the Court of France, where every one wished to see it; but no one was able to until after the King's death, since at his desire it was allowed to remain in his room as long as he lived.

One day *Madame Catherine* took with her to the King's room her son *Francis* and little *Margot*, who began to talk at random, as children will. Now here, now there, these children had heard this picture of *Adam* and *Eve* spoken about, and had tormented their mother to take them there. Since the two little ones at times amused the old King, *Madame la Dauphine* consented to their request.

“You wished to see *Adam* and *Eve*, who were our first parents; there they are,” said she.

Then she left them in great astonishment before *Titian's* picture, and seated herself by the bedside of the King, who delighted to watch the children.

“Which of the two is *Adam*?” said *Francis*, nudging his sister *Margaret's* elbow.

“You silly!” replied she, “to know that they would have to be dressed!”

This reply, which delighted the poor King and the mother, was mentioned in a letter written in Florence by Queen Catherine.

No writer having brought it to light, it will remain, like a sweet flower, in a corner of these Stories, although it is in no way droll, and there is no other moral to be drawn from it except that to appreciate these pretty speeches of infancy one must beget the children.



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